

Statement of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group at the Ministerial Round Table on "Managing Mining For Sustainable Development"
18th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development
UN Headquarters, New York, 12 May 2010

The Indigenous Peoples major group thanks Madam Chair for this opportunity. Due to time constraints, we will go direct to our key points and recommendations. Firstly, we wish to endorse the recommendations of the women's major group on uranium mining.

Thanks also to our panelists, government delegates, and his excellency, the CSD18 chair who have stated that while mining is an essential element of the economy providing livelihood for millions, they also expressed their deep concern about the grave social and environmental problems caused by mining. As reported, mining is still an unsustainable destructive activity where stronger environmental regulations and social safeguards in different areas should be seriously agreed and implemented. This has long been acknowledged but there is insufficient action. Likewise, there is continuation on the tolerance of the violation of human rights and earth rights, which must surely be unacceptable in sustainable development in this century. Our recommendations therefore are the following:

1. The respect for human rights and aspiration for social justice is an essential pillar of our shared and striving vision for sustainable development. Mining is a grave concern to us because we are disproportionately affected by mining and most subjected to violation of our rights and the environment on which we depend. Neither do we share in the supposed benefits. We call on governments, mining corporations, as well as investors to respect basic existing international standards; and specifically ask corporations and investors to endorse the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the ILO 169 to work with indigenous peoples to elaborate operational guidelines on how to apply these agreed instruments in their operations.
2. Madam Chair, best practice is a welcome concept. But frankly more is written of best practice in mining than can be seen in actual practice. Our bitter experience is that most mining practice is still less than adequate to uphold existing minimum international standards and many national standards.
3. Voluntarism is not enough given the seriousness of the economic, environmental, social, cultural and spiritual impacts that mining can inflict. Stronger patterns of international monitoring and regulation are required.
4. The threats to and opportunities for sustainable development posed by the mining industry require a balanced standing body representing all concerned sectors, not just the industry and governments, to work with

independent monitoring structures to present and disseminate in a transparent manner more information on the serious issues concerning mining extraction.

5. Madam Chair, it is important to differentiate within the general theme of mining. All mining has lasting negative impacts. Some mining produced materials that are essential to vital production. Others do not. Some have environmental impacts which could be significantly reduced while for others, like uranium, this may be impossible. Many think mostly of large scale corporate mining but millions of people work in small-scale mining. Among indigenous peoples, we have peoples who have traditions of small-scale mining that sustain their cultures yet their rights are often not respected.
6. Reductions in the size of the global mining industry would contribute positively to sustainable development especially when combined with increased substitution, recycling and reuse of metals already in existence. In reducing mining, we should particularly target mining activities including uranium, gold, coal, and oil sands which have impacts on health, community and environment that far outweigh any benefit they may claim. We need strategies to reduce or halt such mines and reduce all mining.
7. Indigenous peoples and others deeply affected by mining have raised their complaints in many arenas, Still there is a limited capacity to respond to such complaints. We need improved international mechanisms through which indigenous Peoples and others can raise their concerns and seek redress for violations of their rights and damage to their economies. We believe the existence of such mechanisms would speed the introduction of improved practice.

Thank you Madam Chair.