

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' FORUM 2007

LANDS, TERRITORIES AND NATURAL RESOURCES May 14-25 2007

THE FOCUS OF THE FORUM.

The Sixth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues published clear recommendations in a range of areas considered critical for the physical, cultural and spiritual survival, identity and well-being of the more than 370 million indigenous people worldwide.

The Forum was not just a gathering to celebrate Indigenous Peoples' life but it gave a concrete summons to States to take measures to end land alienation in indigenous territories, through for example a moratorium on the sale and registration of land - including the granting of land and other concessions - in areas occupied by indigenous peoples.

Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpus, an Indigenous Filipina from Northern Philippines, who competently chaired the proceedings was quoted saying: *"One of the key reasons why indigenous peoples are being disenfranchised from their lands and territories is the existence of discriminatory laws, policies and programs that do not recognize indigenous peoples' land tenure systems and give more priority to claims being put by corporations - both state and private"*

The Forum reaffirmed indigenous peoples' central role in decision-making concerning their lands and resources, referring to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as adopted by the Human Right Council on June 29th, 2006, which states that land and resources-related projects "shall not be implemented without the free, prior and informed consent of indigene peoples."

Some of the participants of the Indigenous Forum. Ms Vicky Tauli-Corpus, behind the DESA desk the Chairperson of the Forum.
Photo: Miguel Ibanez.

THE PARTICIPANTS.

The Forum provides a platform for indigenous peoples to voice their demands and dialogue with governments and the UN system about their concerns. This year's high level meeting attracted some 1500 indigenous peoples' representatives, some 30 indigenous parliamentarians from different countries, NGOs and academia, senior and other representatives of around 70 Member States and some 35 UN system entities and other inter-governmental organizations. The Forum made a number of recommendations regarding economic and social development, health, education, culture, environment and human rights, and discussed ways for implementing recommendations within the framework of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

ON THE DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

Throughout the session, participants and Forum members reiterated their strong recommendation to Member States to adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as adopted by the Human Rights Council in 2006 - in its entirety and without amendments - during the current session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Wilton Littlechild, an American Indian chief said, *"It is important that when the world is about to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, indigenous peoples' human rights are recognized with the adoption of this Declaration before the conclusion of the 61st session of the General Assembly,"*

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ASIA, URBAN INDIGENOUS AND MIGRATION

A half-day focus on Asia gave space to the two-thirds of the world's indigenous peoples who live in Asia. The indigenous peoples in the region, expounded on wide range of realities, including non-recognition of their cultural identity, exclusion and marginalization, displacement from their traditional territories and dispossession of lands and resources as a result of logging activity, large-scale plantations, mega hydro-electric dams, extractive industries and also by protected areas.

Another half a day was dedicated on the issue of urban indigenous and migration. The Forum members urged States to work with indigenous peoples to provide employment and economic development opportunities within their own territories and to provide centers in urban areas to meet the medical, legal and other needs of indigenous peoples.





CSD-15 – AN UNFINISHED WORK

The Fifteenth Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-15) took place from April 30th-May 11th, 2007, at UN headquarters in New York. CSD-15 focused on policies and options to advance the implementation of commitments in the areas of energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change. The delegates convened in interactive dialogue and heard inputs from intergovernmental organizations, UN Agencies and civil societies. Side events were held everyday during mid-day. The NGOs present also gathered for daily morning briefings on how the whole commission was developing.

The major groups, i.e., the Women, Youth, Local Authorities, Workers and Trade Unions, Business, Technological Community, Farmers, and NGOs were given opportunities to bring their concerns and focus regarding the issues of CSD-15. The NGOs, for example, highlighted the importance of time-bound targets for energy efficiency and renewables, relevant funding and a review mechanism. Several countries underscored the importance of contributions from Major Groups, and expressed support for specific suggestions

The concerns of CSD-15 are truly complex and controversial. The Chair Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attayah (Qatar) at the start of the

meeting presented a draft text prepared for CSD-15 as based from the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting in February 2007. This was the basis of many negotiations and was presented as a compromised text by the Chairman on the last day of the CSD-15. Its energy section identified fossil fuels playing an important part in the decades to come. However, there was no mention of time-bound targets, nor review mechanism or arrangement. Nuclear power did not appear as part of the energy mix. The industrial development section emphasized the central role industrial development plays in poverty alleviation and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. The air pollution/atmosphere section contained a paragraph on promoting the establishment of country and regional air quality standards and norms, as appropriate. There was no mention of measures to address aviation and maritime pollution. The climate change section characterized climate change as a “global sustainable development challenge” and called for urgent attention and further action by the international community.

The Chair presented a compromise document on Friday evening on a “take it or leave it” basis. After an hour and a half of consultations, delegations reconvened. The Group of 77 and China, the United States, Canada and Mexico approved the Chair’s text, but the EU and Switzerland rejected it on the basis that it did not address the challenges in the thematic areas, meet world expectations or add value. The meeting closed with no adopted outcome document. Instead it was announced that a “Chair’s Summary” of [CSD-15](#) would be issued the following week.

A comprehensive report on CSD-15 may be found on <http://www.iisd.ca/vol05/enb05254e.html#Air%20Pollution/Atmosphere>. A daily summary report on CSD-15 may be found on <http://www.iisd.ca/csd/csd15/>. Critical Commentaries may be found on: <http://www.anped.org/index.php?part=113>

DID YOU KNOW?



In 1923, Haudenosaunee Chief Deskaheh traveled to Geneva to speak to the League of Nations, to defend the right of his people to live under their own laws, on the own land and under their own faith. Even though he was not allowed to speak and returned home in 1924, his vision nourished the generations that followed.

In 1982 the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

(then called Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities) was established by a decision of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

The Permanent Forum was established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 2000/22 on July 28th 2000.

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) emerged from Agenda 21, the program of action for sustainable development adopted in June 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). This was also called Eco 92 or Rio Earth Summit. For more info go to the summary of the history of CSD

<http://www.iisd.ca/vol05/enb05254e.html>

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NEXT FORUM THEME: FOCUS ON CLIMATE CHANGE 2008. The Forum ended with a view to the future by announcing that the 2008 session will focus on the issue of climate changes. This will include research into mitigation measures being taken and how these are impacting on indigenous peoples. There will also be a special focus on the Pacific region, as an area that is already feeling the adverse impacts of climate change. Next year’s session will also devote discussion to the issue of indigenous languages, given that 2008 has been declared the International Year of Languages by the General Assembly and more than 4000 of the world’s remaining 6000 languages are spoken by indigenous peoples, many of which are under threat of extinction.

For more information on the Sixth Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, please see: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/session_sixth.html

For daily meetings coverage releases of the Session, please visit: <http://www.un.org/apps/pressreleases/>

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Zabbaleen scavengers with their donkey and cart from the garbage tip. Right photo: Zabbaleen children scavenging.

WORKING AMONG THE ZIBALA IN CAIRO

Zibala is the Arabic word for garbage, and *zabbaleen* is the name given to the informal system of waste collectors and recyclers in the city of Cairo, one of the world's most polluted cities. Traditionally, donkey driven carts are used to collect waste, which is sorted by the members of the family in *zabbaleen* homes. It is claimed that *zabbaleen* collect tons of the solid city's waste and reuse or recycle 80-90% of the waste they collect.

For more than a century the *zabbaleen* have eked out a meager existence by collecting and recycling garbage; they just live in extreme poverty and work in precarious and unhealthy conditions, exposed as they are to toxic exhalations and substances. They collect garbage from all over the city. Even children, as young as 6 years old, work here. The city growth has caused more people from the southern part of the country, the poorest region of Egypt, to move to the city to work as *zabbaleen*, and this has added to the urban growth.

Mansheya, a hell of poverty and degradation, is one of the poorest neighborhoods of Cairo, at the foot of Moqattam Hills just in front of the Citadel, which is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Cairo.

Fr. Luciano Verdoscia a Comboni Missionary, Vivat Associate and professor at the Department of Islamic Studies and Inter-religious Dialogue of Dar Comboni, has chosen Mansheya to start a project for the poorest of the poor. Fr. Luciano believes that it is crucial to break the vicious circle of extreme poverty, ignorance and deprivation by improving the global conditions and in particular by guaranteeing the right to education to the *zabbaleen's* children. Unfortunately, in spite of the solemn pledge of all the member states of the UN in 2000 to make a major dent in the scourge of world poverty, Egypt is still very far from reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). And yet, July 2007 marks the halfway of these time-bound MDGs.

"We visit the homes of the children and spot those families which are unable to

support their children," says Fr. Luciano. Then together with some volunteer teachers and in collaboration with other educational structures they provide assistance, private tutoring support and education to more than 400 children of 6-13 years, and lately they have managed to open a new center in the district of Eizbet el Nakhl. "Our goal" he states, "is to help the development of the children by welcoming them in a conducive environment, where they may also receive basic health care and a nutritious snack for those most in need. Thus we hope to increase their chances for a better job," as long as the powers of this world decide to put the due stress on human dignity and decent work for all.

By focusing upon humaneness, at grass-roots level, Christians and Muslims are trying to work together in order to overcome stereotypes and prejudices and foster tolerance and peace which may bring about a new dialogue among religions and civilizations. In Mansheya a new world is possible.

Reported by Michele Stragapede, MCCJ, and Vivat Intern

VIVAT INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES IN THE AREA OF HIV/AIDS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA.

Tarcisia Hunhoff, SSpS is a member of National AIDS Council of government of Papua New Guinea and works closely with many government agencies. She has been instrumental in promoting Voluntary Counseling and Testing in the country. This has greatly enabled the people to know their status. The Catholic Church introduced the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) pilot project in the country in 2003. The following hospitals took part in the pilot Project. St. Joseph Hospital Mingende, Simbu Province, St. Mary's Hospital Vunapope, Raboul, St. Mary's Medical Centre Boroko in the National Capital. The staff was trained with the support of the Catholic Medical Mission Board, New York. UNICEF provided technical and financial support especially for Anti Retroviral Treatment (ART) for mother and child.

The National Catholic AIDS Office was tasked by the National AIDS Council to provide the training curriculum for PMTCT for the country. This was accomplished in 2006 with the technical support of the following United Nations agencies namely: UNICEF and



Head of the National Catholic AIDS Office of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands Sister Tarcisia Hunhoff (left), and Catholic Health Secretary of Kandiawa Diocese Sister Kinga Czerwonka [both VIVAT Members] with a friend at the Dirima launch. An Aids patient in the hospital is taken cared of by a nurse. And a grandmother who now cares for the child of parents who died from Aids.

World Health Organization and Global Fund. Over the period of the last three years, twenty-five Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) Centers have opened across the country and more new Centers are being opened in regions where the infection rate is high. Global Fund provides funding for VCT and the Clinton Foundation provides for Pediatric Treatment.

A Summary Report on the HIV/AIDS Training of VIVAT members held in Goroka, in the Eastern Highlands, PNG from February 15 to April 18, 2007.

There were a total of 18 participants. They came from the following countries: Indonesia, Timor Leste, South Korea, Russia, Ukraine, South Africa, Zambia, Ghana, Togo, Philippines, Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia.

The first week of training, centered on an “**Introduction to HIV/AIDS**” and among the presenters were the following, namely: the Melanesian Institute, the Provincial AIDS Committee, Doctors from the Goroka Base Hospital, Family Voice, and Nick de Groot, SVD, a VIVAT Member, a moral theologian, and others, took part introducing the participants to a wide range of social issues which are influencing the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The second and third week focused on training in ‘**Voluntary Counseling and Testing**’ of HIV’. This part took two full weeks and the participants learned not only the counseling skills but also the use

of Rapid Test Kits for testing. They all had to learn to do the testing. At the end of the training they received their certificates from the National AIDS Council, certifying that they had followed the prescribed curriculum, had signed the Code of Ethics and so became certified counselors from an International Training Agency.

After the first two weeks, they traveled by road and air, to different “Care and Counseling Centers” in the country, to have a week of field experience. They benefited very much since they met with HIV positive people, counseled them, and tested their blood for HIV and interacted with them. After their return they shared their experiences which were very powerful.

The remaining sessions were on Home Based Care; the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission; Anti Retroviral therapy for the treatment of AIDS, and Social and Medical Research in regard to HIV. The last week was spent on the holistic care for people living with HIV/AIDS and the Theology of HIV/AIDS.

In the discussion of the “Prevention of HIV from Mother to Child”, a positive mother stayed and shared with the participants her experience as a teacher and a mother of four children.

The Participants also visited the following: St. Joseph Care and Counseling Centre in Goroka, and met with positive people who shared their

becoming, and living with HIV/AIDS. They also visited the Centre of ‘Appropriate Technology’ up in the mountains of Goroka, where an NGO has built some houses that are designed to facilitate for the needs of HIV clients in their villages. These houses are ‘model houses’ designed to make caring for AIDS clients easier. These houses are built in villages, especially in the Highlands Region, where the epidemic is growing very rapidly. They also make other items, such as bucket toilets, showers, to make caring for AIDS victims more easily. All these different exposures widened the Sisters horizon to become inventive and find simply support systems, which can be copied and implemented anywhere. Some of the participants visited the VCT Centers in Port Moresby which are run by different organizations

The final graduation took part on the April 13th which Lucia Mercedes, SSps attended since she was in the country for meetings with SSps Sisters. It was a very joyful event and the participants were very grateful for the training, which they had received. The final evaluation was done with the help of the Institute of Medical Research.

VIVAT International members continue to commit themselves in the ‘care and support of people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS across the globe.

(Reported by Tarcisia Hunhoff, SSps, via e-mail on June 11, 2007.)

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Article 1, Human Rights