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INDIGENOUS PEOPLE: PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

We come here to appeal to the world at large to support our efforts to seek equitable solutions to discrimination, exploitation, racism, ethnocide and genocide of Indigenous Nations and Peoples. We have common goals and responsibilities, and I say, that you, the leaders of this great hope of the world's people, the United Nations, should be working with us and not against us, for peace. We submit to you that as long as you make war against Etencha (Mother Earth), there can never be peace.

-Chief Oren Lyons of the Onandaga Nation and Haudenosaunee Confederacy

In this spirit, Chief Oren Lyons addressed the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations meeting in Geneva in 1997, commemorating the 20th anniversary of the First International NGO Conference Against Discrimination of Indigenous People of the Americas.

International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004)

The International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (IDWIP) was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly (resolution 48/163) on December 21, 1993, on the recommendation of the World Conference on Human Rights. The main objective is to strengthen international cooperation to address problems faced by IP in such areas as human rights, environment, development, education and health. The General Assembly also called for the International Day of the World's

Indigenous People to be observed annually on August 9th.

The objectives of the IDWIP include: the promotion of activities beneficial to IP by the UN and other international and national agencies; the education of IP and non-IP societies about the cultures, languages, rights and aspirations of IP and the promotion of the rights of IP; the implementation of recommendations concerning IP adopted by all high-level international conferences, including the proposal to establish a permanent forum for indigenous issues in the UN system; the adoption of the draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and the development of international standards and national legislation to protect and promote IP's human rights. (Reports on the implementation of the Decade's Programme can be found on <http://www.unhchr.ch/indigenous/documents.htm>)

Indigenous or aboriginal peoples are so-called because they were living on their lands before settlers came from elsewhere; they are the descendants of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived.

(Introduction, The Rights of the IP, <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu6/2/fs9.htm>)

Indigenous Peoples comprise 5% of the world's population but embody 80% of the world's cultural diversity. They occupy 20% of the world's land surface but nurture 80% of the world's biodiversity. In the Americas there are more than 1000 IP, in Africa 2011, in Europe 225, in Asia 2165 and in the Pacific 1300. Together the more than 6700 IP have an estimated combined population of 500 million people living in territories claimed by 193 international states. (Fourth World Eye, www.cwis.org)

BREAKING NEW GROUND: A PERMANENT FORUM FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (PFIP)

On July 28, 2000, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted a resolution to establish the PFIP, a major step in a long process that began in 1993 when the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights first proposed such a forum and that will reach fruition at the ground-breaking for the first PFIP in New York, May 13-24, 2002.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, Coordinator of the IDWIP, welcomed the decision as a "historic step forward." "The PFIP," she said "promises to give IPs a unique voice within the UN system, commensurate with the unique problems which many IP still face, but also with the unique contribution they make to the human rights dialogue."

The UN organized workshops in Copenhagen (1995) and Santiago, Chile (1997), and IP groups around the world organized conferences which produced declarations with recommendations and proposals concerning the PF's mandate, membership, participation, location and funding.

Mandate The PFIP is an advisory body to ECOSOC with a mandate to discuss indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights. The PFIP will:

- Provide expert advice and recommendations on IP issues to ECOSOC and, through ECOSOC, to other programmes, funds and agencies of the UN.
- Raise awareness and promote the integration and coordination of activities related to indigenous issues within the UN system
- Prepare and disseminate information on indigenous issues.

Membership The PFIP is composed of 16 experts, eight nominated by governments and elected by ECOSOC and eight appointed by the ECOSOC President following formal consultations with governments, which in turn have discussed prospective nominees with IP organizations. The selection process is based on the principles of fair representation, diversity and geographical distribution of IP, transparency, and equal opportunity for all IP. The sixteen members are appointed for a three-

year period with the possibility of re-election or re-appointment for another three-year period. Decisions will be made by consensus.

Participation Organizations of IP may participate as observers in accordance with the procedures that are applied in the Working Group of Indigenous Populations regardless of their consultative status with ECOSOC. States, UN Bodies, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs that have consultative status with ECOSOC may also participate as observers.

Secretariat The Office of the UN Commissioner for Human Rights is designated as the "lead agency" to implement the resolution.

Funding Financing for the PF will be provided from within the existing resources through the regular budget of the UN and its specialized agencies, and through voluntary contributions.

PFIP : A Geat Challenge

The PFIP is a high-level body, the only body within the UN system that deals solely with indigenous issues. With the establishment of the PFIP, IP have become members of a UN Body, ensuring them the opportunity for full involvement. Although it may take some time before all IP learn about the PFIP, they will no doubt want to make full use of the Forum once they do. It is up to all stakeholders to make the historic forum a dynamic, effective and respected body in the UN and an organ of service to the world's IP. Chief Oren Lyons captures this vision with wisdom and inspiration:

In these times, humanity must work together, not just for survival, but for quality of life based on universal values that protect the delicate inter-relatedness of life that protects us all... Biodiversity is a clinical, technical term for this intricate interweaving of life that sustains us. We indigenous peoples say that we are related to this life: thus your "resources" are our "relations." It is all in how you look at it.

(1997 Geneva Meeting)

(For more information about the PFIP, log on to <http://www.unhchr.ch/indigenous/main.html>)

VIVAT INTERNATIONAL (VI) AND THE PFIP

VINY will represent VI at the ground-breaking of the PFIP. VINY has applied for accreditation to participate as observer and if granted, the thousands of IP whom our members serve in so many countries, their hopes and aspirations, will be made present. The PFIP provides a new impetus for VI to strengthen its commitment to Indigenous Peoples and to more active partnerships in their struggle for rights to land, sustainable development, education, culture and health. VI members can help by monitoring local and national governments in the promotion and protection of the rights of IP.

VI acknowledges the initiatives and efforts of its members on-the-ground in the conservation of the cultures of the IP they serve.

VI is an active member of the NGO Committee on the UN International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. VINY would appreciate if our members on the ground who are working with IP could provide VINY with basic information regarding particular IP and your activities with them. Please, direct your reports to Fresnida Carmen Castro (*carmen@vivatinternational.org*).

THE FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In March of this year, two important meetings were held in Monterrey, Mexico: the Global Forum (GF) on Financing the Right to Equitable and Sustainable Development (March 14-16, attended by 2600 participants, from 700 organizations and 80 countries from all regions of the world) and the UN International Conference on Financing for Development (ICFfD, March 18-22), the first UN hosted conference to address various key financial and development issues. VIVAT International participated as an accredited NGO for the first time. It was represented by Lawrence Correa SVD from VI-New York, and Florella Cudiamat SSpS and Donald D'Souza SVD from Mexico.

Over 50 heads of State or Government, over 200 ministers as well as leaders from civil society and the private sector, and senior officials of all the major intergovernmental financial, trade, economic, and monetary organizations attended the conference. *The Monterrey Consensus* was the main document adopted by the Conference on March 22, 2002 (see *www.vivatinternational.org*, under Financing for Development).

VI participated in a three joint statements with other Catholic NGOs, with NGOs from Africa and Asia, and with Franciscans International. These can be found on the VI homepage under 'Financing for Development.'

It was a nice and interesting experience for me to see, be with, share with different people of varied cultures and be part of that human struggle to reduce poverty. Two points of view, that of the donors and that of the recipients, are like two different worlds. They don't meet. I experienced the continuous struggle of civil society, especially the NGOs, to present their proposals to alleviate the suffering of the less developed and developing countries. I witnessed the good will of every participant to express themselves, to be heard and be considered part of the process. There is hope for a better world. As a whole, I viewed my experience there as enriching and challenging. Thank you for letting me experience the great internationality.

Sister Florella Cudiamat

My participation in the Global Forum and in the UN Conference on Financing for Development came as a surprise to me as I had never taken part in something of that sort. Not only was it an eye opener to me to the various situations in the world, it also widened my horizons as it enabled me to acknowledge the various possibilities that we SVDs have where we can make a lot of difference in the world. For example, our responsibility against racism, our work in respect to ecology, women, migrants and refugees, HIV/AIDS, our work with the indigenous groups and culture of life were burning issues in the Global Forum. I think we SVDs can do a lot in the fight against poverty and have been doing it in various parts of the world. I feel that it's where VIVAT International and its members club in pretty well.

Father Donald D'Souza

VINY ACTIVITIES

March 4-15 46th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Maria Carmen Castro participated. Important resolutions were adopted such as: mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programs in the UN system; release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflict; reaffirming the need for governments and relevant actors to implement the commitments contained in the "Declaration on HIV/AIDS" adopted in the GA Special Session on HIV/AIDS; and the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women. The 46th CSW concluded with a significant resolution on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, which urges the transitional government of Afghanistan to take steps to improve the quality of life for Afghan women and girls law (E/CN.6/2002/2-7). **International Women's Day** was celebrated during the session (March 8). Its theme was "Afghan Women Today: Realities and Opportunities." It focused on the need for the international community to support the Afghan women and girls. (See www.un.org under ECOSOC – Women – CSW – 46th).

A Recommendation

We urge VI members, in promoting women's issues, to focus not only on the Beijing Platform of Action, nor on Beijing +5 but also on the realities that have become pronounced more recently and were not the focus of these two declarations: globalization, terrorism and transnational crimes, the internet, computer technology, aging, medical and biological ethics and modern day slavery, to mention a few.

March 5 Workshop on Ethical Dimensions to Financing for Development

This was organized by the NGOs with a Catholic base under the sponsorship of International Catholic Organizations (ICO), the NGOs of the Sub-committee on Eradication of Poverty, the Justice and Peace Groups based in Rome, and the Permanent Missions to the UN of Grenada and Poland. The five major faith traditions (Christian, Islam, Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish) reflected on the ethical dimensions of the issues being raised in the International Conference on FfD. (See www.vivatinternational.org under Financing for Development).

March 9 – 11 Meeting with VI Members in Mexico

Lawrence Correa, on his way to attend the UN Conference in Monterrey, met with VI members (SVDs and SSpS) in Mexico. The purpose of the meetings was to share with members about the growth of VI, to clarify issues, and to find ways to work more effectively in the promotion of VI and UN objectives. VINY conveys its sincere thanks to the SVD and SSpS Provincial Superiors for their cooperation and gracious hospitality.

April 2 VI joins the UN NGO Committee on Africa

In view of VI's strong presence and commitments in the continent of Africa, Lawrence Correa has registered in this NGO for creating linkages and networking in the future.

April 11 Treaty Event for Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)

Fresnida Carmen Castro and Lawrence Correa participated. 66 countries have ratified the statute and it will enter into force on July 1, 2002. On that day, the Court's jurisdiction over crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity will take effect opening the way to a new era of justice and accountability (see <http://www.un.org/law/icc/statute/romefra.htm>)

TOWARDS WSSD IN JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

PrepCom III for the World Summit on Sustainable Development was held at the UN, New York from March 22 to April 5. Nearly 1500 representatives of governments, UN agencies, international organizations and major groups attended (see www.vivatinternational.org under sustainable development). PrepCom IV will be held May 27- June 07, in Bali International Convention Center, Bali, Indonesia. PrepCom IV will be a ministerial level meeting, which will draw upon the agreed text from PrepCom III to prepare a concise and focused document.

VI is planning participation in the Summit in Johannesburg from August 26 to September 4 and the NGO Forum that will take place from August 18-25, 2002.