



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES INDIGENOUS VOICES

PRESS RELEASE
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**MESSAGE OF VICTORIA TAULI-CORPUZ, CHAIRPERSON OF
THE UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ADOPTION BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

Through the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the United Nations marks a major victory in its long history towards developing and establishing international human rights standards. It marks a major victory for Indigenous Peoples who actively took part in crafting this Declaration. The 13th of September 2007 will be remembered as an international human rights day for the Indigenous Peoples of the world, a day that the United Nations and its Member States, together with Indigenous Peoples, reconciled with past painful histories and decided to march into the future on the path of human rights.


I hail representatives of Indigenous Peoples who patiently exerted extraordinary efforts for more than two decades to draft and negotiate the Declaration. This Declaration has the distinction of being the only Declaration in the UN which was drafted with the rights-holders, themselves, the Indigenous Peoples. I hail the independent experts and representatives of States and NGOs who contributed actively to this process. This magnificent endeavour which brought you to sit together with us, Indigenous Peoples, to listen to our cries and struggles and to hammer out words which will respond to these is unprecedented.

The long time devoted to the drafting of the Declaration by the United Nations stemmed from the conviction that Indigenous Peoples have rights as distinct peoples and that a constructive dialogue among all would eventually lead to a better understanding of diverse worldviews and cultures, a realignment of positions and, finally, to the building of partnerships between states and Indigenous Peoples for a more just and sustainable world.

For the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Declaration will become the major foundation and reference in implementing its mandate to advise members of the Economic and Social Council and the UN agencies, programmes and funds on indigenous peoples' human rights and development. It is a key instrument and tool for raising awareness on and monitoring progress of indigenous peoples' situations and the protection, respect and fulfillment of indigenous peoples' rights. It will further enliven and operationalize the human rights-based approach to development as it applies to Indigenous Peoples. It will be the main framework to



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guide States, UN bodies, Indigenous Peoples and civil society in making the theme of the Second Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples "Partnership for Action and Dignity" a reality.

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is explicitly asked in Article 42 of the Declaration to promote respect for and full application of the provisions of the Declaration and follow-up the effectiveness of this Declaration. On behalf of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, I commit the Forum's devotion to this duty.

This is a Declaration which sets the minimum international standards for the protection and promotion of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Therefore, existing and future laws, policies, and programs on indigenous peoples will have to be redesigned and shaped to be consistent with this standard.

Effective implementation of the Declaration will be the test of commitment of States and the whole international community to protect, respect and fulfill indigenous peoples collective and individual human rights. I call on governments, the UN system, Indigenous Peoples and civil society at large to rise to the historic task before us and make the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples a living document for the common future of humanity.

For further information:

Mobile Phone: 1-347-761-4315 (US) and 63-9175317811 (roaming)

Email: vicky@tebtebba.org, yticorpuz2006@yahoo.com

**Website: www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii
www.tebtebba.org**

