

18 May 2009

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,
to the Eighth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on
Indigenous Issues**

Excellencies,
Madame Chairperson,
Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum,
Indigenous Elders and Representatives,
Sisters and Brothers All,

I am honoured to be invited to address the opening ceremony of the Eighth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. I am pleased to see so many indigenous representatives here at the United Nations, coming from around the world to participate in this Eighth Session. The Forum continues to be a shining example of collaboration and dialogue between indigenous peoples, Member States, the United Nations system and civil society at large.

It was an historic moment when on 13 September 2007 the General Assembly adopted, by an overwhelming majority, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Our challenge is now to fully and effectively implement the Declaration. Partnerships are crucial to achieve this objective, and States and the UN system should strive to ensure that indigenous peoples fully participate in this process.

In this regard, I welcome Australia's recent endorsement of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and urge all governments that may have voted against the Declaration or abstained to follow Australia's lead. I would also like to express my optimism about developments in my own region, Latin America, where the Declaration is having a profound resonance, including its adoption as national law in Bolivia. I think we are all proud of the great effort that President Evo Morales Ayma has been making to promote and implement the rights of indigenous peoples and all excluded people. We are witness to the irreversible progress being achieved in other countries as well.

The Permanent Forum's emphasis on accountability and its decision to devote this session to the follow-up of its recommendations in three of its mandated areas is highly significant. I sincerely hope that this analysis of the implementation of the Forum's recommendations, as well as the in-depth dialogue with six UN agencies, will result in strengthened accountability and partnerships for the full implementation of the Declaration.

I especially welcome the Forum's decision to follow-up on its recommendations regarding the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples. The Second Decade's objectives include the

promotion of participation and partnerships, as well as the enhancement of monitoring mechanisms and accountability.

Regarding the Second Decade, I would like to point out that the General Assembly recently adopted a resolution on indigenous issues, in which it calls for a mid-term assessment report of the Second Decade, evaluating progress made in the achievement of its goals and objectives. This exercise represents another vital step towards strengthened partnerships and accountability and the full implementation of the Declaration.

Despite significant progress, it is important to point out that indigenous peoples continue to face marginalization, extreme poverty and other human rights violations that threaten their ways of life and, in some cases, their very survival. The ongoing global economic crisis will undoubtedly have a negative impact on indigenous peoples around the world.

It is a bitter irony that the people who are doing the most to protect our dear Mother Earth from the rapacious landlords and agro-industrialists are the ones who are hurt the most by this and related crises. This fundamental injustice underlines the urgency of concerted action to fully implement the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the objectives of the Second Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

It is also one of the fundamental reasons that why I would like to bring to your attention an important meeting that is deeply relevant to Indigenous Peoples around the world – indeed to all people who are struggling to have their voices heard in this period of global economic turmoil and hardship. A summit of leaders from all 192 Member States of the General Assembly will meet from 1 to 3 June to address the global economic and financial crisis and its impact on development. While smaller groups of countries have met to resolve the deepening economic and financial crisis, the United Nations is the appropriate forum where the needs and interests of all countries can be taken into account.

I would like to conclude by commending the members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, indigenous representatives, Member States and UN agencies gathered here for your continued commitment to indigenous peoples' rights. In these times of broken promises and eroded trust, it is truly significant that you have placed both hope and trust in this United Nations Forum. I hope that this Organization is and always be there when you need it. I wish you a very successful and productive Eighth Session.

Thank you.