

Background Information on the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the UN Interagency Support Group on Indigenous Issues

I. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations established by ECOSOC Resolution 2000/22, with a mandate to discuss indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights.

According to its mandate, the Permanent Forum:

- provides expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to the Council, as well as to programmes, funds and agencies of the United Nations,
- raises awareness and promotes the integration and coordination of programming on indigenous issues within the UN system, and,
- prepares and disseminates information on indigenous issues and rights.

Each year the Permanent Forum holds annual two-week sessions with the participation of Indigenous Peoples, governments, UN agencies and NGOs. The first session was held in New York City in May 2002 and to date it has held ten sessions.

With the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on September 13th, 2007 the United Nations established international human rights standards for indigenous peoples. The Declaration calls upon the States, and the international community to protect, respect and fulfill indigenous peoples' collective and individual human rights and it has been the main framework guiding the work of the Permanent Forum and of the Interagency Support Group on Indigenous Issues.

Articles 42 of the Declaration clearly spells out the responsibility of the different agencies and bodies of the United Nations, it states that:

“The United Nations, its bodies, including the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and specialized agencies, including at the country level, and states shall promote respect for and full application of the provisions of this Declaration and follow up the effectiveness of this Declaration.

II. The United Nations Interagency Support Group on Indigenous Issues

The IASG on Indigenous Issues is a mechanism for inter-agency cooperation on indigenous issues in relation to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII)¹ and more widely. It is formed by focal points/units of the departments or organizations of the UN system whose work is relevant to indigenous issues.

The main objectives of the UN Inter-agency support group are: to provide an opportunity for the exchange of information in regards to their work on indigenous issues, strengthen inter-agency cooperation to promote the human rights and well-being of indigenous peoples including the

dissemination and implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, analyze, disseminated and contribute to the implementation of the recommendations of the forum; interact with the Forum and its members to provide and seek information, advice and substantive inputs; advise in the mainstreaming of indigenous issues within the UN system, and strengthen mutual collaboration.

The Inter-agency Support Group meets at least once a year for a substantive meeting, with follow-up meetings and communications as necessary. Responsibility for hosting is rotates among participating organizations and bodies and this year UNFPA will host the 2011 Inter-agency support group meeting from 21st to 23rd November, 2011 at Head quarter's.

III. UNFPA and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the IASG

Since 2005, the Culture, Gender and Human Rights Branch through its Human Rights Advisor and LACRO/PD through the Regional Desk Adviser for LAC, have been the UNFPA principal and alternate to the Permanent Forum Sessions and to the IASG, coordinating closely with IERD the Fund's participation and key messages in these sessions.

At the request of ECOSOC, at each session of the Forum, UNFPA presents a report on its work on indigenous peoples' issues. Today this report includes information on UNFPA's work in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and in some countries in Africa. UNFPA also contributes with the PFII's sessions through active participation and statements, and the promotion and participation in side events that permit UNFPA show disseminate the important work it is carrying out at regional and country level to advance indigenous women and youth human rights and sexual and reproductive health.

UNFPA LACRO also contributes to the participation of indigenous women leaders in the Permanent Forum's sessions, in which they advocate for their rights to gender equality, and participation in decision making processes that impact their lives, amongst other important topics.

In the year 2009, UNFPA was among the six agencies that during the Forum's Session held an in-depth dialogue on Indigenous Issues led by UNFPA's DED for Programme, Ms. Purnima Mane. The comments of the PFII on this dialogue were very rewarding for UNFPA. The PFII's stated that:

"UNFPA has been an important partner to the UNPFII, as well as an active participant in the Inter-Agency Support Group on indigenous peoples' issues. The Permanent Forum congratulates UNFPA for its important role in advancing indigenous women's human rights and reproductive health, including its efforts to reduce maternal mortality and to empower indigenous women to advocate for their own reproductive rights."

UNFPA has also held a lead role in the LAC Regional Inter-agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues established in 2008 and as a member of this group has strongly contributed with other UN agencies and the Permanent Forum's Secretariat to the capacity development of national institutions and indigenous

peoples' organizations. This has been done through providing support and technical assistance to workshops and missions at country level.

IV, The 2011 Annual Meeting of the Interagency Support Group on Indigenous Issues

1. Dates and Venue: 21st November till 23rd November, 2011. UNFPA Conference Room 6H

2. Participants:

The 2011 Annual Meeting of the IASG will take place in UNFPA on the 21st to the 23rd of November, with the participation of representatives of the following UN Agencies and International Institutions: DPA, ECLAC, Fondo Indigena, IFAD, OHCHR, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues/DESA, UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, UN-Habitat, and the World Bank.

3. Purpose of the Meeting:

In line with the roles and responsibilities of the Interagency Support Group the meeting will seek the following results:

- To have received substantive information on the work of UNFPA and from other UN agencies in the field of population and indigenous peoples, including on population dynamics, data collection, maternal health and reproductive rights, empowerment of indigenous women and on gender based violence.
- To exchange information so that all participants receive an update on the main work being carried out by the Agencies and Institutions of the IASG in responding to the recommendations of the PFII's Sessions and their agencies' mandates, highlighting opportunities and challenges, including from the LAC regional IASG and from UNFPA Representatives from Africa.
- To enhance collaboration with Permanent Forum Members through the exchange of information on new developments and by receiving their advice on specific issues.

4. Agenda, Annex #2 (draft)

6. Detailed list of participants, Annex #3