

Message from the World For World Organization on the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People, 9 August 2010

Rome, the World For World Organization (WFWO) and UN NGO IRENE Western Europe calls for recognition of Indigenous Peoples' Sustainable Development rights as integral to their human rights. The indigenous peoples continue to suffer and violations of their rights, in all regions of the world, deserve our utmost attention and action.

The International Day of the World's Indigenous People is an opportunity to underline the importance of the rights of indigenous peoples and to pay tribute to the value and resilience of their cultures and sustainable developments way.

The World For World Organization (WFWO) and UN NGO IRENE Western Europe is observing the International Day of the World's Indigenous People today, expressing solidarity. As we celebrate these contributions, we call on Governments and civil society to fulfil their commitment to advancing the status of indigenous peoples everywhere, in upholding the human rights as integral rights for development of the indigenous people across the globe.

The International Day of the World's Indigenous People (IDWIP) will be observed at the United Nations Headquarters on 9 August. The theme of this year's Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is indigenous filmmakers, who give us windows into their communities, cultures and history. Their work connects us to belief systems and philosophies; it captures both the daily life and the spirit of indigenous communities.

The adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly in 2007 was a landmark in the struggle of indigenous peoples for justice, equal rights and development. There have also been recent welcome steps at the national level; some governments have recognised to the indigenous peoples for past injustices, and others have advanced legislative and constitutional reforms.



The world's indigenous peoples – 370 million in 70 countries - are the custodians of some of the most biologically diverse areas on earth. They speak a majority of the world's languages, and their traditional knowledge, cultural diversity and sustainable ways of life make an invaluable contribution to the world's common heritage. Constituting a relatively small portion of the world's 6.3 billion people, indigenous and local communities represent the largest portion of linguistic and cultural diversity on Earth and their traditional lands and waters overwhelmingly contain the greatest remaining reserves of biodiversity. The traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities can play an important role in addressing some of

the grave issues currently facing humanity, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, although its potential has yet to be fully explored. An estimated 70 per cent live in Asia and the Pacific. In Latin America alone there are more than 400 different indigenous peoples, each with a distinct language and culture. Most indigenous peoples live in developing countries and are disproportionately represented among the poor: they account for an estimated 5 per cent of the world's population, but 15 per cent of those people living in poverty. In many countries, particularly in Latin America and Asia, rural poverty is increasingly concentrated in indigenous and tribal communities. Yet indigenous peoples living in marginal rural areas – hills, mountains, forests, drylands, deserts, small islands and the Arctic –have a rich knowledge and understanding of ecosystem management. They maintain within their lands and territories 80 per cent of the world's biodiversity.

The gap between the principles of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the reality remains wide, as indigenous peoples continue to suffer discrimination, marginalisation in such fields as health and education, extreme poverty, disregard for their environmental concerns, displacement from their traditional lands and exclusion from effective participation in decision-making processes. It is particularly disconcerting that those who work to correct these wrongs are, all too often, persecuted for their human rights advocacy.

WFWO will continue to work with its partners to contribute alongside secular and faith-based organisations to ensure that Indigenous Peoples' development rights are part of the agenda of the UN MDGs to redress the historical, social, political, and economic marginalization of Indigenous Peoples around the globe. We should redouble our efforts to build a true 'Partnership in action and dignity' – the theme given by the General Assembly to the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People – as we work together towards full application of the rights affirmed in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for the survival, dignity and well-being of indigenous peoples of the world. The recent partnership agreement signed between the WFWO and Willy Brand Foundation, the project will be focus on workshops training with indigenous peoples in Asia and Latin America to systematically document their knowledge about climate change, which will serve as a basis for developing new proposals for development interventions.

WFWO/UN NGO IRENE Western Europe is committed to advocating universal adherence and implementation of the Declaration and will continue to support and raise public awareness on human rights mechanisms dealing with the rights of indigenous peoples and calls and stand up with the UN System and Governments and civil society and NGO's local communities to act united with determination to close this implementation gap, We need to bring the rights and dignity of those who are suffering most to the centre of our efforts. This requires changes in practices, but we also need improved laws and institutions, without which advances are not sustainable. This in full partnership with indigenous peoples to implement and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) objectives.

WFWO's Communications Team