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**On the Occasion of the International Day of the World's  
Indigenous People - August 9, 2009,**

**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.**

Rome, 9th August 2009 - 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 and calls for recognition with the international community 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 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 International Day of the World's Indigenous People (IDWIP) will be observed at the United Nations Headquarters on 10th August. This year theme of the observance will be indigenous peoples and HIV/AIDS and the commemoration of the IDWP will include messages from the United Nations Secretary General, the Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs and the Chairperson of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, performances by indigenous artists, and a panel discussion related HIV/AIDS.

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 apologised to 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.

"Still, the reality faced by the indigenous peoples remain some of the most marginalised populations, around the globe suffering disproportionately from poverty and inadequate access to education and health and other sustainable developments facilities. Many face discrimination and racism on a daily basis. All too often, their languages and cultural diversity face strictures or are threatened with extinction, while their territories are sacrificed for mining and deforestation will have more impact on the environmental issues.

"Indigenous peoples also tend to suffer from the low standards of health associated with poverty, malnutrition, environmental contamination and inadequate healthcare. As this year's observance of the International Day focuses on the threat of HIV/AIDS. It is essential that indigenous peoples have access to the information and infrastructure necessary for detection, treatment and protection.

"Insufficient progress in health as part of MDGs, in particular, points to a persistent and profound gap in many countries between the formal recognition of indigenous peoples' rights and the actual situation on the ground. On this International Day, The WFWO and UN NGO IRENE Western calls and stand with on Governments and civil society and NGO's local communities to act united with determination to close this implementation gap, is essential for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in full partnership with indigenous peoples.

## Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and the Eight MDGs

The theme year's observance of the International Day also marks the for the World's Indigenous Peoples devoted to the further strengthening of international co-operation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in areas such, health, focusing on HIV/AIDS as part of the MDGs.

Indigenous peoples are disproportionately represented amongst the poor and extremely poor, and suffer from inadequate access to basic healthcare and education, as well as to quality, culturally. A lack of food security poses a threat to indigenous peoples in the Pacific region and around the globe. Agriculture – the main food source – is becoming increasingly vulnerable owing to heat stress on plants and salt water incursions, especially in small island states.

Indigenous peoples are one of the groups more severely affected by poverty and have not been granted enough attention in MDG-related processes. This is confirmed by several reports within and outside the UN framework.

Including indigenous peoples in MDGs processes means:

- Giving attention to indigenous peoples as groups suffering discrimination and disadvantaged situations
- Integrating specific targets for addressing the situations of indigenous peoples
- Undertaking research on key issues in relation to the achievement of the MDGs by indigenous peoples such as analysis of appropriate policies in education, healthcare, employment, training and housing
- Ensuring that indigenous peoples can participate in decision-making and policy implementation processes in all development and poverty eradication efforts affecting them.

### Indigenous Peoples - Lands, Territories and Natural Resources

Around the world, indigenous peoples are fighting for recognition of their right to own, manage and develop their traditional lands, territories and resources. At the international level, their representatives are advocating for the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the UN General Assembly.

The Declaration – the result of more than two decades of negotiation - emphasises that indigenous peoples' control over their lands, territories and resources will enable them to "maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures and traditions" and to "promote their development in accordance with their aspirations and needs".

The International Day of the World's Indigenous People on Sunday (August 9) is a reminder that New Zealand is one of only three nations opposing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, says the Human Rights Commission. The Declaration was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007 and opposed by New Zealand, Canada, the United States and Australia. In April this year the Australian Government announced that it now supported the document, and the Commission wrote to Prime Minister John Key urging the New Zealand Government to do the same. Although the Prime Minister has indicated that the Government is considering a change of stance, nothing has yet come of it.

The Commission is hosting a forum on human rights and the Treaty as part of the New Zealand Diversity Forum at Te Papa on August 24, at which the Declaration will be examined in detail.

Today, 84 percent of Maori live in urban areas. Most are in the main metropolitan centres: a quarter live in the region, of Auckland, New Zealand's largest city. The urban migration of Maori has been described as one of the most rapid movements of any population. Internal migration,

especially in small island states, has brought almost half of the national population to the cities and urban areas with negative environmental consequences, including a demand on local resources. External migration to cities in the larger Pacific states such as Australia and New Zealand is also on the increase.

Indigenous peoples worldwide are vulnerable to a range of social and economic factors that affect their human rights. They tend to lack access to education, and live on lands that are vulnerable to natural disasters, with inadequate or no sanitation, and poor or no access to health services, all of which contribute to lower productivity and incomes among indigenous populations. "Push" factors contributing to indigenous peoples' migration to urban areas include land dispossession when indigenous peoples are forcibly removed or driven from their homelands, poverty, militarisation, natural disasters, lack of employment opportunities, and the deterioration of traditional livelihoods. Indigenous peoples who migrate to urban areas in the region face discrimination owing to their indigenous identity. Vulnerable to exploitation, they often do not enjoy basic rights, being subjected to limited access to health services, inadequate housing and unemployment.

The traditional lands of many indigenous peoples. However, the very existence of many of these territories is under threat due to rising sea levels caused by climate change. Soil erosion from destructive wave activity, frequent storm surges and landslides is resulting in land loss to many indigenous communities. As such, an integral part of the culture, heritage and traditions of Pacific indigenous peoples is in jeopardy.

For example in the Kiribati and a number of other small Pacific island nations could disappear during this century. High tides and stormy seas have also caused problems recently in the Marshall Islands, Cook Island, Tuvalu and low New Guinea.

Plantations and livestock serious threats from new diseases and pests linked to flooding, droughts and other climatic variations.

Climate change and climate variability in the Pacific has led to unreliable water availability which carries serious consequences for indigenous peoples. For instance, Australia is experiencing the worst drought in 100 years, despite flooding that has occurred over the past few months. In other parts of the Pacific, indigenous peoples rely on unpredictable and untreated river water sources owing to a lack of water storage systems.

Warmer sea temperatures have led to the bleaching of the Pacific Island's main source of survival – the coral reefs. Consequently, the biodiversity surrounding the reefs is likely to be impacted, with conditions possibly becoming critical for the local fish population.

As the Second Decade of Indigenous Peoples enters its fourth year, it is time to implement all the recommendations contained in the UN Declaration and to encourage governments, non-governmental organisations and the private sector to recognise that the recommendations must be translated into concrete policies if Indigenous Peoples are to participate on equal terms in national and international life to achieve the MDG's objectives.

WFWO celebrates and support the recognition of rights, of Maori communities and other Indigenous peoples worldwide. And WFWO will continue to work 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

"In conclusion insufficient progress in health as part of MDGs, in particular, points to a persistent and profound gap in many countries between the formal recognition of indigenous peoples' rights and the actual situation on the ground. On this International Day, To achieve this, we all - Governments, indigenous peoples, the United Nations system and NGO's and others concerned - must join our efforts and reach solutions based on true dialogue, mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for human rights. This is no easy task. But it is the only way we can move the rights of indigenous peoples from paper to practice.

WFWO/UN NGO IRENE Western Europe is committed to advocating universal adherence and implementation of the Declaration and will continue to support human rights mechanisms dealing with the rights of indigenous peoples and calls and stand with the UN System and Governments and civil society and NGO's local communities to act united with determination to close this implementation gap, in full partnership with indigenous peoples to implement and to achieve the Millennium Developments Goals (MDGs) objectives".

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