

## *Press Statement*

### *6<sup>th</sup> International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change*

*2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2003, Milan, Italy*

We, the Indigenous peoples from different regions of the world are participating in this 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. We are present here to reaffirm that our special relationship with Mother Earth is sacred and must be honoured, protected and respected. Our holistic vision strongly binds biological diversity, cultural and spiritual identity and unites people with our ancestral territories. Our ancestral territories, spiritual, social, biological and cultural resources are the fundamental basis for our existence, health and livelihoods but have been threatened and destroyed by climate change and its consequences.

Prior to this Conference, International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change was organised jointly by International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forest and Climate Alliance from Nov 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> 2003. The forum ended with the Milan Declaration, 2003.

The 6<sup>th</sup> International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change states that full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in the climate change processes must be ensured. Indigenous peoples have suffered from climate change since they live in the most vulnerable ecosystems and whose very existence is inextricably linked to that of Mother Earth. Furthermore, decisions are being made in the UNFCCC that may have direct effect on indigenous peoples.

A concrete mechanism to ensure this is for the UNFCCC to establish an Inter-sessional Working Group of Indigenous Peoples on Climate Change. This working group shall study the impacts of climate change on indigenous peoples and propose

adequate solutions that will take into account indigenous views, concerns and perspectives on climate change.

We call on the UNFCCC to include indigenous peoples and climate change as items in the agenda of the COP and the Subsidiary Bodies meetings with specific reference to vulnerability, adaptation, poverty, and other impacts of climate change.

Our rights to our lands and ancestral territories must first be recognized and respected before any CDM projects are undertaken in indigenous lands and to ensure that these projects do not lead to further violation of indigenous peoples' rights nor lead to the expropriation of their lands, resources and livelihoods. These climate-change projects may include so-called "sinks" monoculture plantation projects, as well as hydropower projects that have impacted negatively on indigenous peoples.

We call upon the UNFCCC to recognize that through the protection and promotion of Indigenous Peoples' rights and through recognizing and integrating our dynamic and holistic visions in the UNFCCC process, we are securing not only our future, but the future of humanity and social and environmental justice for all.

We express our appreciation to the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change, Ms. Joke Waller-Hunter for the statement made on 9<sup>th</sup> August: the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples for her special note on the contribution and aspirations of indigenous peoples to address climate change by our active participation.