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### Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

#### Third session

New York, 10-21 May 2004

Item 3 of the provisional agenda\*

**Substantive theme: “Indigenous women”**

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#### **Note by the Secretariat\*\***

#### *Summary*

Following the decision of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to make “Indigenous women” the special theme of its third session, a number of activities have taken place to prepare input relating to that theme. The present note briefly provides information on such activities, including preparations for the high-level panel and dialogue on indigenous women, and points out some of the areas where the input of the Permanent Forum would be particularly pertinent.

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\* E/C.19/2004/1.

\*\* The document is being submitted after the slotted date in order to take into account the results of the 2004 session of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality.

## **I. Introduction**

1. At its second session, in May 2003, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues decided that the special theme of its third session would be “Indigenous women”, and the Economic and Social Council confirmed this in its decision 2003/305 of 25 July 2003. Among its recommendations, the Forum included a number on indigenous women, contained in chapter I, paragraphs 64, 65, 77, 81, 108, 128 and 129, of its report on its second session.<sup>1</sup> The selection of the special theme “Indigenous women” was prompted by the recognition of the significant contributions of indigenous women to their communities and also by the need to address the special challenges that they face. In selecting the special theme the Permanent Forum also responded to the recommendation of the Indigenous Women’s Caucus and others, as well as its own desire to contribute meaningfully to the 10-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2005.

2. Important policy initiatives at the regional level relating to indigenous women have been planned for 2004. In chapter I, paragraph 128, of the report on its second session, the Forum recommended that the Economic and Social Council, the relevant United Nations cooperating agencies and Governments of the regions involved provide technical facilities and grant the necessary political and moral support for organizing (a) the Fourth Continental Summit of Indigenous Women of the Americas, (b) the Second Continental Conference of Indigenous Women of Africa and (c) the Second Conference of Asian Indigenous Women.

3. In preparation for the third session, the secretariat of the Permanent Forum invited Governments, the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations, indigenous organizations and other non-governmental organizations to include material relevant to indigenous women in their written submissions for that session. Various agencies and Governments have integrated such input into their overall submissions, which are published under item 4 of the provisional agenda, “Mandated areas”. Some responses of non-governmental organizations are devoted to indigenous women exclusively and thus are published under item 3. Delegations preparing for the third session of the Forum were also encouraged to enhance the representation of indigenous women at the session. As of the date of submission of the present document, responses from the United Nations system (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children’s Fund, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme) had integrated elements on indigenous women.

## **II. High-level panel and dialogue**

4. The Forum will convene a high-level panel and dialogue on indigenous women on 10 May 2004 to stimulate further discussion and analysis within the Forum, the United Nations system, Governments, indigenous peoples’ organizations, non-governmental organizations and others. The discussion is also expected to inform the consideration of the other agenda items of the third session so that

recommendations can be formulated taking into account the human rights of indigenous women.

5. The members of the panel will include Njuma Ekundanayo, Vice-Chairperson of the Permanent Forum, with the portfolio on gender; Kyung-wha Kang, Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women; Noeli Pocaterrea, Second Vice-President of the National Assembly of Venezuela; Mary Robinson, Chairperson of the Council of Women World Leaders, Executive Director of the Ethical Globalization Initiative, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and former President of Ireland; and Stella Tamang, Chairperson of the International Indigenous Women's Caucus. The panel will be chaired by the Chairperson of the Forum, Ole Henrik Magga. Representation of United Nations Member States at the level of Permanent Representative will be encouraged. After the introductory statements of the panellists, the Permanent Forum will hear the reports of regional indigenous women's caucuses. A dialogue will take place with Forum members as well as observers representing Member States, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, indigenous peoples' organizations and non-governmental organizations. A Chairman's summary of the panel will be prepared and annexed to the report on the third session.

6. The substantive framework of the high-level panel and dialogue is provided by the relevant international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, as well as policies outlined by various global conferences, such as the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen), the Millennium Summit (New York), the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo) and others. Questions that the panel is expected to address include:

- (a) The main challenges faced by indigenous women today;
- (b) Some good examples of approaches to solutions at the national and local levels, as well as at the regional, subregional and international levels;
- (c) How the rights of indigenous women should be better promoted and protected;
- (d) How development programmes for indigenous women should be enhanced at the national and international levels;
- (e) What types of action are needed in legislation, institutions, policies and budgets;
- (f) How the Permanent Forum, other United Nations bodies and mechanisms, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, indigenous peoples' organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and others can strengthen their contributions to the improvement of the lives of indigenous women.

### **III. Mainstreaming gender throughout the third session of the Permanent Forum**

7. In order to promote the integration of the special theme throughout the mandated areas of the Permanent Forum, special guests will be invited to participate in introductions of the various items on the agenda. These will include Feride Acar, Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Yakin Ertürk, Special Rapporteur on violence against women; Erica Irene Daes, honorary permanent member of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations; representatives of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes; and others. It is expected that this rich debate will lead to comprehensive recommendations on indigenous women.

### **IV. Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality**

8. At the third session of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, held in New York from 23 to 26 February 2004, the secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues informed the Network of the special theme of the 2004 session of the Permanent Forum and invited the Network to contribute actively to this process and to place the subject of indigenous women on the agenda of the 2005 session of the Network as a separate item.

9. In the report of the Network to the Commission on the Status of Women, it was noted that the situation of indigenous women was identified as one of the emerging issues that would require more consistent and focused attention at the inter-agency level and, in view of the special theme of the third session of the Permanent Forum, members of the Network were encouraged to provide inputs. It was suggested that the Network could include an item on indigenous women at its next session, in 2005. The Network subsequently decided to include such an item on its agenda for 2005 and to establish an intersessional task force to work on the issue. Eight members of the Inter-Agency Network offered to be the initial members of the task force on indigenous women, namely, the Division for the Advancement of Women/Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues/Division for Social Policy and Development/Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Africa, FAO, ILO, OHCHR and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. The secretariat of the Permanent Forum was designated task manager.

### **V. Commission on the Status of Women**

10. The Commission on the Status of Women will have before it, among other documents, the report of the Inter-Agency Network, which identifies the situation of indigenous women as an emerging issue. Within the framework of the 2004 session of the Commission, one of whose thematic issues is “Women’s equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building”, the secretariat of the Permanent Forum organized a panel discussion on 10 March 2004 on the topic “The participation of indigenous women in conflict

prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building". Participating in the panel discussion were Michel Duclos, Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations representing the presidency of the Security Council for March 2004; Njuma Ekundanayo, Vice-Chairperson of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, with the portfolio on gender; Carmen Jerez, Director of the Educational Network of Ambayata (Ecuador); Stella Tamang, Chairperson of the International Indigenous Women's Caucus; and Danilo Türk, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Johan Schölvinnck, Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development/Department of Economic and Social Affairs, served as moderator.

## **VI. Side events**

11. Special emphasis is placed this year on side events on the special theme of the third session of the Permanent Forum. In case of a shortage of space, the Secretariat will give priority to the hosting of events on issues relating to indigenous women.

## **VII. Other issues brought to the attention of the Permanent Forum**

12. In addition to points raised under parts II to VI above, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues may wish to pay attention to the following international initiatives, which are of immediate relevance to the special theme "Indigenous women" and would warrant the reflection and input of the Permanent Forum:

(a) The 10-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2005;

(b) The 2004 *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*, focusing on gender and migration. A Secretary-General's report on the topic will be submitted to the Second Committee of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and will be a significant contribution to the 10-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action;

(c) The scheduled publication in 2005 of the next edition of *The World's Women* by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The publication will analyse the current state of gender statistics at the national level, with a focus on official statistics relevant to monitoring progress towards achieving gender equality, as mandated by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and embodied in the Beijing Platform for Action. The analysis of the publication will consider all gender-related aspects of the Millennium Development Goals;

(d) The commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its next session, from 6 to 23 July 2004. The Committee is expected to devote special attention to migrant women in 2005;

(e) **The issue of migration as a major theme in various international initiatives. It would appear appropriate for the Permanent Forum to devote attention to this subject, including the question of the impact of migration on indigenous women.**

*Notes*

<sup>1</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 23 (E/2003/43-E/C.19/2003/22).*

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