



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
3 March 2005

Original: English

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### Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

#### Fourth session

New York, 16-27 May 2005

Agenda item 3 of the provisional agenda\*

**Special theme: Millennium Development Goals and indigenous peoples**

### Information received from the United Nations system

#### Note by the Secretariat

#### Addendum

### Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

#### *Executive summary*

The present note outlines the contribution of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to the fourth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, encompassing activities carried out by FAO to implement the recommendations made by the Forum at its third session in 2004.

Section I, on the Millennium Development Goals, discusses those activities of FAO that are linked with or involve indigenous peoples' priorities in the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. It refers particularly to two major activities that were carried out in 2004: the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security; and the entry into force of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Through these activities, FAO helped take fundamental steps towards the recognition of indigenous rights to food and to genetic resources.

Section II describes activities undertaken by FAO during 2004 on indigenous peoples and food security, traditional knowledge and indigenous agricultural systems, access to and development of communication systems for indigenous peoples, and indigenous women.

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\* E/C.19/2005/1.

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## **I. Millennium Development Goals**

1. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has welcomed the United Nations initiative to work towards the elimination of hunger and the achievement of sustainable development through the Millennium Development Goals. Poverty alleviation and food security are of great importance in the work of FAO. Since 1994, food security (defined as the access of all people at all times to the food they need for an active and healthy life) has been a top priority for FAO. The World Food Summit held in Rome in November 1996 called for concerted efforts at all levels, to raise food production and increase access to food in 86 low-income food-deficit countries in order to halve the number of undernourished people by the year 2015. The Summit goal is related in various degrees to the Millennium Development Goals.

2. FAO is now developing an institutional strategy for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, considering its mission, vision and role in the development arena. The strategy cuts across the different units and topics of FAO work.

3. The Forum at its fourth session proposed as a special topic for its fifth session, the analysis of activities related to Millennium Development Goals 1 and 2 and indigenous peoples that are being undertaken by United Nations organizations.

### **Millennium Development Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**

4. Since its establishment, FAO has worked to alleviate poverty and hunger by promoting agricultural development, improved nutrition and the pursuit of food security. Accordingly, most FAO activities are linked directly or indirectly to poverty alleviation and the improvement of the conditions of rural populations in one way or another. We would like to report mainly on two major FAO activities carried out in 2004 that are linked with or involve indigenous peoples' priorities in the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. Through these activities, FAO has fostered the achievement of two fundamental steps towards the recognition of indigenous rights to food and rights to genetic resources.

### **Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security**

5. At the request of the World Food Summit: five years later, which was held in 2001, the FAO Council, at its 123rd session in November 2002, established an Intergovernmental Working Group for the Elaboration of a Set of Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security. The Guidelines were finalized by the Working Group in September 2004 after wide discussions and negotiations among Governments, with the participation of civil society and non-governmental organizations. The FAO Council, at its 127th session in November 2004, adopted the Guidelines (available from [http://www.fao.org/righttofood/common/ecg/51596\\_en\\_VGS\\_eng\\_web.pdf](http://www.fao.org/righttofood/common/ecg/51596_en_VGS_eng_web.pdf)) and recommended their implementation by member countries, and their wide dissemination to all relevant United Nations bodies and

organizations. These Guidelines are a fundamental step towards pursuing the right to food for the hungry and poor, including those in vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples. Their implementation should constitute an important contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal 1.

### **International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture**

6. The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture was adopted in November 2001 and entered into force in June 2004.<sup>1</sup> The first meeting of the Treaty's Governing Body will be held in 2006.

7. The objective of the Treaty, in harmony with that of the Convention on Biological Diversity<sup>2</sup> is to achieve the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from their use, for food security and sustainable agriculture. The Treaty recognizes the enormous contribution that farmers and local and indigenous communities have made, and continue to make, to the conservation and development of plant genetic resources. This is the basis for farmers' rights, which include the protection of traditional knowledge, and the right to participate equitably in benefit-sharing and in national decision-making on plant genetic resources.

8. The entering into force of the Treaty is a major milestone for international cooperation in the areas of food security and biodiversity management. The implementation of the Treaty is of great relevance to indigenous peoples and their organizations, and will contribute to the recognition of farmers' rights.

## **II. Activities in response to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

### **Indigenous peoples and food security: regional activities**

9. During its third session, the Forum stressed the need to work more extensively on a regional basis and to focus more on regional issues. It was agreed that the existing Forum focal points system should be used and strengthened in this respect. Several FAO activities related to food security were carried out considering this particular regional dimension.

#### **Third FAO Regional Consultation of Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations for Latin American and the Caribbean**

10. A regional consultation on the follow-up to the World Food Summit and World Food Summit: five years later, was carried out in Guatemala City in April 2004 with the participation of 70 representatives from 22 countries in the Latin American and the Caribbean region. The objective of the consultation was to analyse, with the civil society groups, including indigenous peoples, the status of the food security situation in that region, and propose possible alternatives with respect to overcoming hunger and malnutrition within a framework of food sovereignty and the right to adequate food. During the Consultation, a special meeting of the participating indigenous peoples' organizations was held. The declaration and

recommendations of those organizations which constituted the outcome of the meeting became a contribution to the Consultation. The conclusions and recommendations of the Consultation were presented at the Twenty-eighth FAO Regional Conference for Latin American and the Caribbean, held in Guatemala City from 26 to 30 April 2004.

### **Reorienting national and regional Caribbean food security strategies towards the needs and livelihood priorities of indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups**

11. During 2003 and 2004, the FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme supported the elaboration of five needs assessment case studies of vulnerable indigenous and other groups. The groups, of key importance to the region, were the Arawak (Guyana), the Garifuna (Belize), the Black Caribs (Dominica), the Bush Negros/Maroons (Suriname) and a group of women artisan fish processors (Nicaragua). The lessons and recommendations produced by the studies included activities to be undertaken within national plans for implementation of the Regional Programme for Food Security. The lessons and recommendations were discussed by indigenous peoples' groups from the Caribbean region in a workshop carried out in Belize on 19 and 20 July 2004. Together with other participants, representatives from the Caribbean Antilles Indigenous Peoples Caucus and the Diaspora participated in the meeting.

### **Indigenous groups contacting FAO**

12. During the Forum's third session, a recommendation was made in favour of contacts between the FAO national and regional representations and the indigenous peoples' groups, for information and collaboration purposes. As part of this effort, strengthening of the collaboration on food security issues between indigenous peoples' groups and our FAO regional offices, in particular the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the FAO Subregional Office for the Caribbean, has taken place.

### **Traditional knowledge and indigenous agricultural systems**

13. Traditional knowledge in agriculture and food security has become an important working area in FAO. FAO has reported to the Forum at previous sessions on ongoing activities on this subject in the areas of gender, nutrition, integrated land management and biodiversity. This note highlights some of the activities that took place between June 2004 and January 2005.

### **Globally Important Indigenous Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS)**

14. FAO, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is undertaking an initiative aimed at the global recognition, conservation and sustainable management of the world's outstanding indigenous and traditional agricultural systems and their associated landscapes, biodiversity, knowledge systems and cultures. This inter-agency initiative will support and strengthen the millennial and inherently sustainable agroecological practices of indigenous and traditional farming communities. It will develop strategies to reduce their poverty and improve food

security. Additionally, it will mobilize national and global recognition for the outstanding characteristics, goods and services produced by these systems. It will mobilize policy and institutional support for their safeguarding as well. The project will be implemented in up to 10 countries.

15. The GIAHS initiative is currently developing collaboration with indigenous peoples' groups in the organizations of a Latin American and Caribbean meeting aimed at the development of a regional initiative for the support and recuperation of the traditional farming systems of indigenous peoples.

### **World Food Day 2004**

16. On 16 October of every year, the world celebrates World Food Day. A special theme related to food and agriculture is usually selected as the topic of the Day. FAO has selected the topic of "Agriculture and intercultural dialogue" as the topic of World Food Day in 2005. "Cultures and agriculture" and "The contribution of civilizations to world agriculture" are the two sub-topics. This initiative will be a major opportunity to highlight the important contribution of indigenous peoples to food production and sustainable management of agricultural ecosystems.

### **Access to and development of communication systems for indigenous peoples**

17. The need for the development of communication systems for and with indigenous peoples was widely supported as an important issue during the third session of the Forum. During 2004, FAO was developing activities that responded directly to this need.

#### **Communication systems for indigenous peoples at local level**

18. FAO has been involved for several decades in the development of communication systems that are geared towards and managed by rural people. Through participatory and multimedia approaches, these systems promote the sharing of knowledge and information among rural groups, including indigenous peoples. They support rural and indigenous people in the exchange of experiences and knowledge, and in finding common grounds for collaboration and management of agricultural and rural development activities. The approach of FAO to rural communication is no longer understood as constituting a top-down transfer of messages, but rather as entailing the use of appropriate new information and communication technologies (ICT), blended with local and indigenous sources of information and practices, thorough participation and multimedia approaches.

19. In September 2004, FAO hosted the ninth United Nations Round Table on Communication for Development. The Round Table included a discussion session on communication for isolated and marginalized groups. The discussions included examining communication, information and knowledge transfer of indigenous peoples. Starting with the people, preserving indigenous knowledge and culture, and viewing communication as a process of empowerment were some of the lessons from experience discussed during this particular session.

20. As a preparation for the First World Congress on Communication for Development to be held in Rome in September 2005, FAO collaborated in the development of the round table on “Communication for development: indigenous peoples in Latin America” which was held in Granada, Nicaragua, in January 2005. The objective of the round table was to discuss topics and propose an agenda that would encompass the subject of communication and indigenous peoples, to be considered during the World Congress.

### **Indigenous women**

21. FAO is implementing a regional project (LinKS Project: Gender, biodiversity and local knowledge systems for food security) funded by the Norwegian Government in Eastern and Southern Africa. This project focuses mainly on gender, local and indigenous knowledge systems and their important role for the sustainable management of agro-biodiversity for food security.

22. The objectives of the LinKS research activities are to obtain a better understanding of local knowledge, agro-biodiversity and gender, and develop materials to raise awareness of their importance. In addition, it aims to enhance the ability of researchers and development workers from key partner organizations to apply an understanding of local knowledge systems of men and women on agro-biodiversity and food security. Technical advice and facilitation were provided to numerous activities, including, for example:

- Local knowledge and the management of animal genetic resources among the Maasai pastoralists in the United Republic of Tanzania: an investigation into the dynamics of gender roles and local knowledge on breeding and selection under the influence of migration. This study has been implemented in collaboration with the Division of Research and Development of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security of the United Republic of Tanzania.
- The utilization and sharing of local knowledge of men and women in the area of range management and forage plants for improving livestock productivity and food security in the Maasai and Barbaig communities of Kibaha in the United Republic of Tanzania.

### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> The text of the Treaty is contained in appendix D of the report of the FAO Conference on its thirty-first session, Rome, 2-13 November 2001 (C2001/REP), available from [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1760, No. 30619.