

**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 14th session, April 20 – May 1, 2014
Agenda Item 8: Future Work of the Permanent Forum: Discussion on Indigenous Human Rights/Development Indicators**

Statement Submitted by the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), presented by Andrea Carmen

Thank you Madame Chair.

Beginning in 2007 at the 6th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, IITC provided updates on our collaborative work with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to develop, define and implement the **“Cultural Indicators for Food Security, Food Sovereignty and Sustainable Development”**. This work was carried out based on the recognition by Indigenous Peoples that Cultural Indicators were previously the “missing pillar” in international policies on sustainable development including food security.

The 11 Cultural Indicator Areas linking human rights, cultural integrity, environment, food sovereignty and sustainable development were developed with the input of over 5000 Indigenous persons from around the world. They were finalized at the 2nd Global Consultation on the Right to Food, Food Security and Food Sovereignty for Indigenous Peoples held in September 2006 in Bilwi Nicaragua. It followed the 1st Global Consultation in Sololá Guatemala in 2002 which produced the Declaration of Atitlan.

The Cultural Indicators provide a framework and practical tool for Indigenous Peoples to assess and measure the positive and negative effects of programs, methods, technologies and impacts coming from outside their communities such as mining, deforestation, pesticides use, genetically modified seeds and climate change, as well as the resiliency of traditional practices and methods and their transmission to new generations. They demonstrate the unbreakable links between self-determination, free prior and informed consent, Treaty rights, access to lands and resources including water, culture, spirituality and the protection of ecosystems and biological diversity.

They were also intended to be used as a framework and tool by UN Agencies and bodies, development institutions, States and NGO’s to assess their programs, initiatives and projects impacting Indigenous peoples on the local, regional, national and international levels.

From October 2007 – February 2010, the IITC, in conjunction with more than 400 Indigenous communities and organizations, carried out a field testing program to present, disseminate, provide training and apply the Cultural Indicators to issues of priority concern to the participating communities. Over 450 Indigenous representatives from 66 Indigenous communities and Peoples in Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, Canada, the US and Alaska participated in ten workshops focusing on implementing the Cultural Indicators. Many participants were designated representatives of their Nations, organizations and communities, and their responses reflected the reported input of a total of 10,085 community members.

96% of respondents stated that this process was very helpful or helpful in addressing related issues of concern to their community. It also provided a starting point for collective discussions

which lead or contributed to the development of a number of community-based initiatives to respond to threats and strengthen traditional systems and practices. These included a traditional seed bank in Northern Mexico, a tribal school project for transmission of traditional intergenerational food related knowledge in Alaska, and national campaign to oppose the distribution of GMO foods in Guatemala among others.

A detailed report containing all the responses as well as assessment, outcomes and key lessons learned from the “field testing” process was submitted jointly by UN FAO and IITC to the UNPFII in 2010 and can be found on the web page under documents of the 9th session.

A question was posed to the panelists in the morning session today regarding if and how Indigenous Peoples would be involved in the development of themes as well as specific indicators. Based on our experience, only the Indigenous Peoples themselves can truly determine the most effective, viable and useful indicators to assess the specific challenges, threats and political contexts which impact them, including any shortfalls in the recognition and implementation of their rights.

We will cite one striking example based on responses under Indicator theme area #5 addressing the preservation and use of traditional languages as a key component of food sovereignty and sustainable development, Indigenous Peoples who focused on that theme area determined that number of individuals in a community who speak their language was not the best indicator to measure its vitality and long term survival. Neither was number of children in a community who were learning the language. They determined that the most important indicator to measure the viability of their language over the long term was the percentage of households in a given community that use the Indigenous language as their FIRST LANGUAGE IN THE HOME.

In conclusion we offer two recommendations to the UNPFII:

- 1) That the UNPFII affirm that Indigenous Peoples need to be directly and actively involved in determining Indicator themes as well as specific indicators that are the most important for assessing, implementing and protecting the reciprocal relationship between their human rights and culturally and rights-based sustainable development; and
- 2) That the UNPFII recommend that members of the inter-agency support group, UN member States and agencies incorporate and apply Cultural Indicators in assessing programs and policies which serve and impact Indigenous Peoples including respect for the right to free prior and informed consent, including in the development of effective and useful Indicators for assessing the implementation of human rights in the context of development.

Thank you.