



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Statement by the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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9 August 2005

I would like to congratulate the indigenous peoples on this, their first international day of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples, which we hope will usher in further strides in mainstreaming the concerns of indigenous and local communities in the activities of the international community.

With the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues being well-established, the foundation has been laid to build on the pioneering efforts towards attaining solid gains in the intergovernmental processes which are of most interest to your communities.

The beginning of this Second Decade coincides with the first year of the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. For the Climate Change Convention and the Protocol these are critical times which will have a great impact on our global future. In this context I encourage the indigenous peoples organizations focussed on climate change issues to continue their efforts in supporting the goals of the Convention. The significance of indigenous peoples knowledge and expertise is particularly important in the emerging work programme on adaptation. Your communities, which have developed in harmony with the geophysical and natural surroundings and created vital societies in some of the most vulnerable of locations, are at the forefront of the current dilemma. Your input into activities relating to recognizing, assessing and dealing with changes can only benefit our process. Furthermore, with your global network of communities, you are well placed to increase the awareness of the impacts of climate change and to ensure that local projects related to climate change reflect your concerns.

The recent Arctic Climate Impact Assessment reinforces the fragility of ecosystems to climate change and brings into sharp focus the effect on the local peoples, communities, fauna and flora. The climate system belongs to every individual and it is only by pulling together that we can tackle this problem.

On the eve of a new Decade, I look forward to a collaborative working relationship between the secretariat and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues based on the valuable experiences gained together over the last several years.
