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Note by the Secretariat

ON THE PANEL ON THE PARTICIPATION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN CONFLICT
PREVENTION, CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND POST-CONFLICT PEACE-BUILDINGA side event within the context of the Commission on the Status of Women
held on 10 March 2004Summary

A panel entitled “*Participation of indigenous women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building*” was organized by the Secretariat for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, in cooperation with the Tribal Link Foundation. The panelists were Ms. Stella Tamang, Chair of the International Indigenous Women’s Caucus (Nepal) and Ms. Carmen Jerez, Director of the Educational Network of Ambayata (Ecuador), the French Presidency of the Security Council for the month of March, represented by Mr. Michel Duclos, Minister Plenipotentiary, Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr Danilo Türk. Ms. Njuma Ekundanayo, Vice-Chairperson of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (Democratic Republic of Congo) was unable to attend and her statement was delivered by the Secretariat. The Panel was chaired by Mr. Johan Schölvinnck, Director of the Division of Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

This document is a summary of the issues raised by the panel as well as the challenges and recommendations of the panel, which appear in part III of this note. These recommendations promote the inclusivity of indigenous women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building

“It is a fact that conflict or difference is a natural and unavoidable part of life but which, instead of thinking otherwise, can be used as an opportunity for growth and learning. We do not always create the conflicts that come our way but we can always choose our response to those conflicts. Our focus in conflict situation should be to learn how to creatively deal with conflict rather than to avoid it or to allow it to destroy us.” (Naga Women Magazine)

I INTRODUCTION

1. In the holistic view of development now espoused by the United Nations, peace and human rights are elements inextricably linked to development. All three constitute the main aims of the United Nations, as established in Article 1 of the United Nations Charter.
2. The profound concerns of the impact of conflict situations on indigenous peoples have been brought to the United Nations by indigenous representatives since the early 1980s and have been reflected in the documentation of United Nations human rights bodies. From Guatemala to the Philippines, from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Colombia and Bangladesh, indigenous and tribal peoples have been among the most vulnerable victims of conflict and violence. Indigenous women have been part of these tragedies, suffering additional violence due to their gender.
3. The inclusion of indigenous women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peace building represents a double challenge. In order to make the voice of indigenous women heard among dominant groups of society, we need to do a tremendous amount of work to integrate women and to integrate indigenous people, encouraging them to seek position at all levels of decision-making. Mainstreaming will restore the right of indigenous women to make choices about their lives in times of war and peace. Indigenous peoples have been trying to tackle the problems facing their communities in times of conflict by organizing themselves at the international level, as well. In 2000, in Manila, an international conference was held on Conflict Resolution, Peace Building, Sustainable Development and Indigenous Peoples. The Manila Declaration of the International Conference on Conflict Resolution, Peace Building, Sustainable Development and Indigenous Peoples included various provisions on indigenous women:
4. At its session in New York in May, 2003, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues heard of atrocities against indigenous peoples, including unfathomable incidents of cannibalism in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which prompted its Bureau to meet with the President of the Security Council.
5. This document is a summary of the issues raised by the panel as well as the challenges and recommendations of the panel, which appear in Part III of this note. These recommendations promote the inclusivity of indigenous women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building as a contribution to the special theme of the Third Session of the Permanent Forum which is devoted to Indigenous Women.
6. Security Council Resolution 1325, women “account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and increasingly are targeted by combatants and armed elements.” Being victims of human rights violations more often than men, women suffer disproportionately from gender-based violence, such as rape, sexual humiliation, sexual mutilation, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and trafficking. When women become refugees or internally displaced, their special needs are rarely taken into consideration. In particular, humiliation has a harmful effect on their dignity and self-esteem.

II CHALLENGES

7. In addition to discrimination due to their gender, indigenous women also face ethnic discrimination. The institutions and systems of conflict resolution, traditional among indigenous people, are not acknowledged by dominant societal groups. Consequently, indigenous people lack the capacity to make decisions about both war and peace. Hence, indigenous women in that context are even more disempowered.
8. The remoteness of the areas where indigenous women often live makes them even more vulnerable to violence, including as they go about their essential daily work of providing water or firewood to their families. Indigenous women, caught up in conflict, rarely receive the necessary health care or psychosocial support and rehabilitation, which is sensitive to their culture and

language.

9. Low literacy rates and low level of education among indigenous peoples, as well as remote location, limit their knowledge and exercise of their rights.
10. Lack of access to mass media makes it difficult for indigenous women to attract attention of the general public to their problems and needs.
11. Armed conflict has an enormously detrimental impact on women's health. The physical and mental stress, resulting from "experiencing death or witnessing death, separation, rape, torture, [\[1\]](#) destruction, loss of livelihood and material deprivation," has an even larger effect on indigenous women, as their access to adequate health care is extremely limited. As seen in such places as Rwanda, mass rape has been perpetrated in a deliberately systematic manner and on a large-scale as part of a genocidal policy. In the former Yugoslavia, forcible impregnation has been used not only to try to destroy the individual woman or girl, but to tear at the fabric of her entire community. Trafficking in human beings, which is seen as a contemporary form of slavery and/or forced prostitution, remains a problem particularly for indigenous women and girls. Indigenous women and their communities remain particularly vulnerable to these crimes.
12. The role of indigenous women as daily tasks' providers and caregivers in their communities becomes threatened during armed conflict, as indigenous women experience lack of land and property rights.
13. Due to the nature of poverty in indigenous people's communities which is exacerbated by armed conflict, indigenous girls from economically desperate households run the risk of dropping out of school and being forced into early marriages.
14. When forced to become heads of households, girls are particularly marginalized, suffer social stigma, and are at an increased risk of abuse and sexual violence. Indigenous women, who stand at the intersection of gender and race, suffer from marginalization and stigma even more.

III RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE PARTICIPATION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN CONFLICT PREVENTION, CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND POST-CONFLICT PEACE-BUILDING

15. The participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building, can be enhance by:
 - i. Ensuring the inclusion in fact-finding missions of the special focus on the human right situation of indigenous women and children in areas of armed conflicts;
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 - ii. Ensuring full involvement of indigenous women in negotiation of peace dialogue and agreements at national and international levels, including through provision of training for indigenous women and their organisations on formal peace processes;
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 - iii. Identifying indigenous peoples customs and traditions and informal peace-building initiatives and provide relevant technical and financial support and establish mechanisms to channel the outcomes of these initiatives into more formal peace processes;
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 - iv. Increasing access to information from indigenous women's groups and networks on indicator of impending conflict as a means to ensure effective gender-sensitive early warning mechanisms;
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- v. Taking steps to prevent from recruitment of girls and boys into armed forces and rebel groups;
- vi. Incorporating the needs and priorities of women and girls as ex-combatants and families of ex-combatants in the design and implementation of Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, (DDR) programmes;
- vii. Recognising and utilize the contributions of women and girls in encouraging ex-combatants to lay down arms, in weapons collections programmes and ensure that they benefit from any incentives provided for such activities;
- viii. Ensuring full access of women and girls to all resources and benefits provided in reintegration programmes, including skills development programmes.

Global (multi-layered implementations)

16. Engender the process of conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict peace building. The inclusion of indigenous women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict peace building activities should be implemented at all levels of decision-making. This is closely linked to integrating indigenous peoples 'participation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace building

Recommend the increased recognition of the women as peace negotiators including in the "formal, public, and official sense." Gender is a policy of the united Nations and is implied through such international instruments as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as well as in developing instruments such as the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and others.

17. Recommendation to "women of the North": It is important that the women in the north take more responsibilities since most of the root causes lies in the north. Women in the north have comparatively more access to information and resources which the women in the south do not have. The women in the north have more rights and freedom than the women in the south.

18. Give recognition and respect for the rights of all peoples and cultures, establishing intercultural and other relationships within the framework of plurality and mutual respect.

International Level

19. Recommend enhancing and implementation of a strong gender focus in conflict-prevention and peace-building.

19. Document conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peace-building efforts carried out by indigenous women in different parts of the world and share this knowledge as widely as possible.

20. Provide technical and financial assistance to indigenous women to build their capacity to effectively participate in conflict resolution and peace-building efforts.

21. International agencies, NGOs, indigenous peoples, and the donor community should include indigenous women in the analysis of conflict and peace-building processes and in the assessments done in the economic, social, political and cultural situation pre and post-conflict.

22. Conduct in-depth research on conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict peace-building, with a focus on both actual and potential role of indigenous women.

23. Create a database of indigenous women's campaign and advocacy resources, networks, organizations; their current status.

24. Encourage indigenous women to forge networks and linkages with other women's organizations and networks at all levels in their respective region and internationally. Organize women into committees of housekeepers, federations of women, women's unions, etc. and mobilize them to play key roles in peace and development processes. Enhance women's capacities to promote human rights.
24. Peace accords should emphasize the obligations set up by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and ensure reporting to the CEDAW Committee. The Beijing Platform for Action and the results of the Beijing Plus 5 Review should inform the participation of indigenous women in peace processes.
25. International organizations should suggest that self-determination is a crucial method of empowerment and in indigenous communities.
26. Special efforts could be made within the United Nations in the context of implementing Security Council Resolution 1325. Currently, only 18% of Secretariat reports to the Security Council have any reference to gender. An analysis has not yet been done as to whether any references are made to indigenous women. It would be important to raise the profile of indigenous women's issues in these reports. A Secretariat report on the fourth anniversary of Resolution 1325 is expected in the fall and this would offer an opportunity to start covering these issues.
22. A special effort should be made by field-based agencies, especially UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA, to collect data on the situation of indigenous women living in conflict areas. Such data will be valuable for a further analysis of the problem, for advocacy and for development programming.
23. The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality has will integrate indigenous women also into its strategies on women, peace and security.
24. There is a need to ensure that statutory provisions prohibiting war crimes and crimes against humanity cover criminal acts perpetrated on a gender basis, since their occurrence remains particularly acute, especially the high incidence of mass rape during armed conflict.

National Level

25. Recommend to Governments to reconsider gender issues in migrant employment programmes which encourage men to seek employment abroad.
26. Set up and advance mechanisms to promote dialogue between governmental structures and indigenous women.
27. Encourage indigenous women to seek decision-making positions and build mechanisms which will enable women to have access to such positions whether in the traditional or modern governance systems.
28. Encourage indigenous women to use the media to highlight their suffering during wars and violent conflicts and their perspectives and recommendations on how to bring about peace and development in their territories.
29. States should reform the educational system, such that it reflects the views and values of indigenous peoples, promotes respect, tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences. Education should become a conduit for cultural survival.

Community Level

30. Raise the profile of indigenous women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict peace-building both among indigenous peoples and among the general public.
31. Strengthen grass-roots institutions for peace-building, paying special attention to the role of indigenous women.
32. Train indigenous women in negotiations; design training, sensitive to indigenous practices.
33. Enhance the capacities of indigenous peoples to undertake research to allow for the broader articulation of indigenous perspectives and worldviews, and to strengthen indigenous peoples' systems and institutions for peace-building and sustainable development.

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Women, Peace and Security at a Glance, OSAGI, DESA, 2003.