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# **Addressee: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), relevant UN bodies**

**Paragraph #75 Session #3 (2004)**

## **Full Text**

The Forum recognizes the unique contributions made by indigenous women in terms of possessing and transmitting through the generations a wealth of traditional knowledge on the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable environmental management, and calls on the secretariat of the Convention for Biological Diversity, UNEP and all relevant United Nations bodies to mainstream indigenous gender issues and knowledge in national environmental policies and programmes.

## **Comments**

CBD - The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has been actively engaged in the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE)/Task Force on Indigenous Women since its inception, in 2004.

The Convention on Biological Diversity in its Preamble recognizes “the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirming the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation for biological diversity conservation”.

A specific framework for the participation of indigenous women is found in the Program of Work of Article 8(j) and related provisions (Decision V/16) regarding participatory mechanisms for indigenous and local communities. Thus, Task 4 of the First Phase of the Programme of work insists on:

“Parties to develop, as appropriate, mechanisms for promoting the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities with specific provisions for the full, active and effective participation of women in all elements of the programme of work, taking into account the need to:

- (a) Build on the basis of their knowledge;
- (b) Strengthen their access to biological diversity;
- (c) Strengthen their capacity on matters pertaining to the conservation, maintenance and protection of biological diversity;
- (d) Promote the exchange of experiences and knowledge;
- (e) Promote culturally appropriate and gender specific ways”

In order to ensure the full involvement and participation of indigenous women in the work being carried under the CBD with regards to traditional knowledge, the Secretariat takes into account gender considerations when selecting participants to our meetings, in our research work, when creating experts groups and in general in all activities related to policy-creation and implementation of the CBD provisions. As an example, the article 8(j) advisory group is composed of 17 members, 9 of whom are indigenous women. In addition, traditional knowledge being a cross-cutting issue within the CBD, the promotion of the participation of indigenous women is applicable to meetings regarding each work program and decisions of the Conference of the Parties.

Finally, the Secretariat continues to cooperate with the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, among other relevant organizations, and with women representatives of indigenous and local communities to ensure that the perspectives and strategies of indigenous women in biodiversity related issues are taken into account in the work being done under the CBD with regards to traditional knowledge.

UNEP reports the following: The UNEP programme of work 2004-2005 included a commitment to make gender a cross-cutting priority in all of its programmes. In the domain of international environment governance, the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building requests UNEP to integrate specific

gendermainstreaming strategies, as well as education and training for women, in formulating relevant policies, and to promote the participation of women in environmental decision-making. In 2004, pursuant to the Global Women's Assembly on the Environment, Governing Council decision 23/11 on gender equality in the field of the environment underlined the need to improve UNEP internal capacity in these respects.

UNEP Governing Council decision GC 23/11 does not address explicitly indigenous women but has many entry points to include indigenous women's concerns and issues in its implementation, for example regarding the importance of integrating into national sustainable development strategies and into poverty reduction strategy papers gender equality and the particular role of women as natural resource managers, as well as to develop, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, a mentorship programme which would encourage young women to take an active role in environmental policy formulation and decisionmaking.

In April 2005, a comprehensive implementation plan was drafted which defines the role that UNEP will play in stimulating and facilitating efforts, both inhouse and with partners at the national, regional and global levels, to overcome constraints and take advantage of opportunities to promote gender equality and equity within the environmental sector. The plan outlines a framework for integrating a gender perspective within all UNEP divisions, branches, units and activities during the period 2006-2010. It establishes strategies with reachable targets and proposes instruments to address gender concerns in UNEP technical areas. UNEP substantive activities under the plan are concentrated in four spheres: policy, organizational, delivery and constituency. The following extract from its introduction is relevant to indigenous peoples: "Gender equality and equity are prerequisites to poverty eradication and sustainable development. The livelihoods of rural and indigenous peoples and those of communities living in poverty are often closely tied to the environment. In these communities, women play a leading role in caring for their families and communities, in sharing their intellectual and social capital, and in protecting and managing natural resources. In many societies, both women and men are agents of change, but their contributions do not receive equal recognition. Gender equality between women and men has a cumulative effect of improved environmental management and protection and poverty alleviation for communities."

A senior gender adviser was appointed in 2007 to UNEP to organize and implement the UNEP action plan for gender. UNEP began implementing its gender

plan of action from late 2006, with a series of gender mainstreaming workshops for UNEP staff and senior management at the division and regional office level. As of December 2007, a strong gender team composed of 40 representatives from the divisions and regional offices has been established. The gender team members are regular staff members who have been nominated by their senior management to work with the senior gender adviser in mainstreaming gender into UNEP work and follow through the implementation of the gender plan of action.

## **Area of Work**

Environment