

**Consultations for the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
September 9th, 2014, Geneva
Delivered by Atina Gangmei
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Dear Co-chairs, member states, major groups and other stakeholders,

I present on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group. I would like to congratulate you on your work and thank for your efforts to include various stakeholders in order to identify best solutions and synchronize efforts with other processes such as Sustainable Development Goals, post 2015 development agenda and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

I am speaking on behalf of 370 million people worldwide who consider themselves indigenous. Indigenous Peoples live in 90 countries, occupying around 24% of the earth's surface and managing 80% of the world's biodiversity. At the same time, despite being 5% of the total global population, we are 15% of the world's poorest and the number has not changed much since the inception of Millennium Development Goals in 2000. We continue to be overrepresented among the poorest and most vulnerable segments of society. Indigenous Peoples are often dispossessed and removed from their traditional lands and territories and deprived of their resources for survival, further weakening their capacity to deal with hazards, both natural and man-made.

The Indigenous Peoples Major Group would like to draw your attention to the recent study done by the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and published on August 7th, 2014 on "Promotion and Protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples in disaster risk reduction, prevention and preparedness initiatives" which contains all key elements of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in relation to Indigenous Peoples. Specific to the zero pre-draft of the outcome document of the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR), we would like to draw some conclusions from the study and give our take on the following sections under review:

On section A (Preamble)

One of the main concerns and issues faced by Indigenous Peoples is the lack of participation in decision-making and lack of recognition of community-driven initiatives. IPs should have the right to participate in matters that affect them and therefore actively engage in disaster risk reduction, prevention and preparedness initiatives. We urge you to include a specific reference to indigenous peoples in the preamble that would encourage national governments to recognize a vital role of indigenous peoples and welcome inclusivity and consultations with IPs in all stages of the development and formulation of targets, indicators and national policies for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).

Additionally, and we wish to underline the centrality of Free Prior and Informed Consent which is of fundamental importance to Indigenous Peoples' participation in decision-making and establishes a framework for all consultations relating to projects affecting IPs, including in the area of DRR. It is the duty of States to obtain free, prior and informed consent through genuine consultations and participation prior to any decision that would directly or indirectly affect indigenous peoples. Therefore, we are asking to include specific language on FPIC in paragraph 5 of the Preamble.

On section C (Guiding principles)

In section C, the Indigenous Peoples Major Group welcomes the inclusion and mention of Indigenous Peoples in paragraph d), urging for full engagement in the determination and implementation of policies along with women, children and youth, and persons with disabilities.

Further, we are glad to see a reference to indigenous knowledge in paragraph l) which reads: “Relevant, local, traditional and indigenous knowledge, culture and practices are to be taken into account”. However, I think that the language needs to be less suggestive and more prescriptive and further strengthened by including that “traditional indigenous knowledge should be incorporated in national and local and preparedness and disaster relief plans”.

Until recently, policy makers have largely ignored this vast body of knowledge, in favor of “Western” science and technology-based methods of disaster risk reduction and response. We need to promote effective sharing of information, knowledge, and research and combine local, traditional, and western science perspectives. As indigenous knowledge comes from an intimate relation with the natural environment, communities have learned to read the signs in the sea, the rain, the wind, clouds, vegetation and wildlife to predict hazards. These local, experiential, “early warning” systems are frequently credited with saving lives and property. There is a need, now, to engage world leaders of indigenous peoples interested in risk reduction, together with their non-indigenous counterparts, in an ongoing dialogue aimed at understanding risks -- those that are unique to indigenous peoples and those shared in common with vulnerable communities throughout the world.

We urge that the outcome document of the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) includes effective approaches to reduce risk to disasters through engaging indigenous leaders and their communities in appropriate studies, documentation of indigenous knowledge and practices for DRR, inclusion of traditional knowledge and coping mechanisms in national, regional and local disaster preparedness and post-disaster plans, with a goal of reducing their vulnerability and increasing their resilience to these events.

Thank you