

Commission on Sustainable Development 13
Interactive discussions – Linkages among the themes including
cross cutting issues.
Indigenous Peoples. 13.4.2005

Estebancio Castro, International Indian Treaty Council, Mercedes Pierre, American Indian Law Alliance and Lucy Mulenkei, Indigenous Information Network

Indigenous Peoples believe that the time has come for translating concepts and ideas into policies. The importance of the three thematic areas of water, human settlement and sanitation services lies in enabling the international community to address these important issues effectively. We therefore agree with those who argue that we should move away from conceptual debates to concrete policies.

Indigenous Peoples have much to offer within IWRM. Indigenous Peoples' traditional systems of water management and use are based upon principles and practices that balance immediate needs with the needs of the environment and other living things, plants and animals, as well as other people, and consider the sustainability for future generations. Integrating this Indigenous Traditional Ecological Approach to IWRM would contribute to meeting the goals of the Millennium Development Goals. Indigenous Peoples have an important role in sustainable water resource management and management assessment tools.

Our concern is that once water and sanitation services are privatized, the essence of life itself, which is the sacredness of water, would be determined and defined by the market system. Under the mechanism of privatization, the delivery of water services is then based on the 'ability to pay', which means that poor communities frequently end up without adequate services and therefore poor health. Madame Chair, we propose the following recommendations:

- Legal protection for indigenous peoples' rights in development processes, planning and implementation of accessible water, sanitation, labor, and other infrastructure projects for human settlements are some of the outstanding obstacles that must be addressed.
- Financial contributions need to be increased from all main sources, such as, national governments, donors, multilateral financing institutions, commercial lenders, private investors, voluntary donations and other sources, and made available to reach countries most in need for water supply, human settlement and sanitation services.
- National and international capital should be available at local levels to enable Indigenous peoples and local communities to finance small-scale appropriate technology water infrastructures and sanitation services.

- Capacity building and appropriate technological transfer initiatives must be implemented which recognize indigenous traditional practices of water management that are dynamically regulated systems. Capacity building includes developing education programs on Indigenous TEK of water systems.
- Political, technical and legal mechanisms on the national and international level must be developed so that the States, private sector and international financial institutions could be held accountable for their actions that threaten the integrity of water systems.
- Governments must enhance the participation and mutual partnership of indigenous peoples, in all aspects of agricultural water use, development and management of water resources, development of water and sanitation services and to recognize indigenous peoples' interests on water use, allocation and customary uses.

In conclusion, fundamental principles such as equality, equity, non-discrimination, transparency, accountability and the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and all the stakeholders are the central elements for ensuring the realization of effective policies on water, human settlement and sanitation services for the better health of our peoples.

Thank you Madame Chair.