

IMPLEMENTATION OF IWRM

**INTERVENTION BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLES,
TUES AFTERNOON - CONFERENCE ROOM 4**

The discussions and reflections during UNCSD16 on integrated water resource management and its implementation are very welcome.

In particular, we hear, and concur that IWRM is a means towards ends, which are socially and politically decided; and that IWRM does not automatically benefit the poor or women, unless community well-being and gender equity are consciously addressed. Securing the customary land and water rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities must be secured as a key IWRM principle and goal, which is already acknowledged in the ecosystem approach.

Having studied IWRM from the lens of indigenous peoples and local communities affected by large dams, it has become clear that the biggest challenge facing IWRM, is democratisation of political processes and water governance, making IWRM truly an inter-sectoral and multi-stakeholder process, including local rights-holders.

Today, indigenous communities in the Philippines, northeast India, Nepal, meso-America and Africa, continue to seek critical information on large dam projects which are planned and being implemented in their territories, without their full and effective participation.

Mr Chairman,

The World Commission on Dams, and its follow-up process – UNEP's Dams and Development Project, gave high priority to facilitating national stakeholder processes to address dialogue and mediation among all stakeholders addressing dams and their alternatives and applying IWRM. When the Dams and Development Project ended in 2006, a useful global mechanism, supporting national processes was lost, but the needs have not disappeared.

Indigenous Peoples networks, as well as civil society networks focusing on issues of dams and their alternatives exist in many regions and countries, and they must be central to the implementation of IWRM.

It is imperative that UNCSD16 and UNCSD17, governments, AMCOW, UN Water, the Global Water Partnership, IUCN and all other relevant bodies, give due attention and resources to strengthening real empowerment and effective participation of local communities and indigenous peoples in all water processes, at all levels, but especially at national and local levels.

Thank you for your attention.