

UN Commission on Sustainable Development
Inter-active Session with Major Groups - Monday, April 30, 2007
Indigenous Peoples Major Group – Opening Statement (Written Version)
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Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this inter-active session with major groups at the opening session of CSD15. I am Estebancio Castro Diaz, speaking on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples major group.

Indigenous Peoples underline that CSD15 outcomes must be adequate to address the enormous challenges posed by energy policy, industrial development atmospheric pollution and climate change. Clearly governments cannot solve these problems alone, without broad action and support from civil society. A fundamental indicator for the success of CSD15 and future progress has to be the congruence between proposals put forward by major groups and government decisions and the democratization and decentralization of solutions in our countries and communities.

In June 2006, the Human Rights Council approved the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the minimum standards to be applied to secure indigenous peoples' rights and well-being. This is before the General Assembly for approval during its 61st session this year. CSD15 must welcome this development as part of the governments' commitment to the implementation of Chapter 26 of Agenda 21 and to enhance indigenous peoples' full and effective participation and contributions to sustainable development.

Indigenous peoples, face disproportionate risks and impacts in relation to large dams, agro-fuel plantations, uranium mining and other extractive industries. We need our rights to be respected with regards policies and projects being considered in CSD15. Any partnership with indigenous peoples on energy and sustainable development, industrial development, air and atmosphere pollution and climate change must be based on respect for indigenous peoples' own identity. Our territories are not extractive reserves for outmoded carbon-intensive technologies. In this view, the start-up capital for development is the cultural and social assets of indigenous peoples, catalyzed by the addition of newly understood mechanisms, technologies and additional financial resources.

Among our key proposals are the following:

UNCSD15 needs to produce robust policy and regulatory frameworks, full corporate accountability for social and environmental impacts, participatory decision-making that values the central contributions of all major groups and respect for human rights, including support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and its implementation.

Addressing climate change requires slowing and halting fossil fuel extraction and the expanding release of carbon into the atmosphere. Social movements and indigenous communities fighting for maintenance of customary land use are also addressing the problems of climate- destabilizing land clearance, fossil fuel extraction, commercial

logging, high-input intensive agriculture and long-distance food transport. Can we hear a commitment from governments to protect our lands and livelihoods from outmoded carbon-intensive projects and the expansion of agro-fuel plantations in our territories?

Can governments support Indigenous peoples' full and effective participation within climate impact assessments which take into account Indigenous knowledge systems, culture, social values, language, spirituality and ecosystems? One example of this is the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment carried out in partnership with Indigenous Peoples. Similar initiatives must be carried out in the Pacific region, in Africa and tropical forest regions.

May we invite governments, to express their full support for these proposals?

For our future generations and all our relations,

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for this opportunity to speak.