

**PREPERATORY MEETING OF THE 13TH SESSION FOR THE  
COMMISSION ON SUSTANABLE DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT  
FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES;  
By Lucy Mulenkei- Indigenous Peoples Caucus.**

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Indigenous Peoples regard water as sacred. We have protected our water sources for many years. The traditional ecological knowledge of the sacred nature of water has motivated Indigenous Peoples from many regions of the world to ensure protection and preservation of water. As we remain the poorest in the world, access to water has become minimal and therefore a need for Governments to recognize the interest in Indigenous rights over water resources, including customary use traditionally held by Indigenous Peoples and ensure that Indigenous Peoples rights are enshrined in State legislation and policy.

Indigenous Peoples must be given options to control and manage our own water and sanitation system. It is therefore important for Indigenous Peoples interests and rights be respected when making international agreements on trade and investments. Water and water services must be kept distinct from the negotiation of the general agreements on trade services, the WTO and other multilateral and regional trade agreements and water services must remain in local control.

Mr. Chairman, Indigenous Peoples and local communities must be active participants in the implementation of the targets set out in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as well as in the implementation of effective Integrated Water Resources Management plans (IWRM).

Water, sanitation and human settlement cannot be separated. All these are human rights needs that we all must have access to. Unfortunately among many Indigenous Peoples, access to clean safe water and sanitation are some of the critical problems our communities face, North and South, and especially in our developing countries. Lack of safe water and sanitation for both rural and urban poor must be fully discussed, strategies must be developed and a need to strengthen clear policies, financial mechanisms and institutional frameworks to improve these services and ensure that Indigenous Peoples have access to safe and adequate water and sanitation.

Mr. Chairman, Governments must recognize that in many Indigenous cultures, women are mostly the caretakers and users of traditional water resources systems and they are the most vulnerable and many at times at security risk due to lack of good and safe sanitation and shelter. There is need to ensure the mainstreaming of gender perspective in integrated water resource management, sanitation and human settlement management planning, implementation and monitoring for poverty reduction, ecosystem protection and sustainable growth. And, we must mention the importance of mechanisms for the youth, our next generation, to have input in these deliberations.

Capacity building and appropriate technological transfer initiatives that recognize Indigenous traditional practices of water management which are dynamically regulated must be implemented. Capacity building which includes developing educational programmes on indigenous traditional ecological knowledge on water system is very important.

Finally Mr. Chairman on finances, we recommend that financial contributions need to be increased from all major donors, multilateral financing institutions, commercial lenders, private investors, voluntary donations and others sources and made available to reach countries and those local communities who are willing to build local services to address water supply and sanitation infrastructures and develop answers to human settlement issues.