

REPORT FROM THE SECRETARIAT

January – June 2008

The Secretariat has been engaged in strengthening participation in three major areas of advocacy and lobby work during the first six months of the year. This is on top of the daily coordinative and information activities being conducted. These areas are in the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women or CEDAW.

In January this year, the Secretariat was invited to participate in the “CBD Workshop to Develop the Gender Plan of Action.” This workshop aims to define the roles of the CBD Secretariat in the promotion of gender equality and equity in its work and program. Consistent with the recommendations during the “Asia Workshop on Gender and Environment: Indigenous Women and the Implementation of the CBD” held in Baguio City, Philippines last 15-19 August 2007, the need and support for capacity building particularly for indigenous women towards effective participation in CBD processes and decision making was taken on as an identified target in the CBD Gender Plan of Action which resulted from the said workshop. This was later presented last May 29, 2008 during the Conference of Parties in Bonn, Germany. The Secretariat has also taken on the opportunity to strengthen linkages with the Indigenous International Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) and the Indigenous Women’s Biodiversity Network (IWBN).

In late February, the UNIFEM’s South East Asia Programme approved our proposal on “Capacitating Indigenous Women in Asia to Monitor State Obligations to CEDAW.” This is a follow-up to the “Study Session on the CEDAW and Indigenous Women” held for AIWN members in 2005. Though very limited in scope, we hope to use this as a venue to build our capacities in using various mechanisms and opportunities open to us, as well as to widen and strengthen linkages with other organizations in pursuit of the recognition of our rights as indigenous peoples and women. This 1-year project covers several training and data gathering activities in Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines.

For this year’s 7th Session of the UNPFII, the Secretariat facilitated a workshop on women and children during the Asia Regional Preparatory Meeting in Nepal which inputted to a statement on indigenous women and children in Asia. This statement was presented to the UNPFII last April. It also facilitated the participation of some AIWN country focal persons to the said activity and successfully coordinated and implemented a side event on the “Impacts of Climate Change on Indigenous Women.” This side event had speakers from Asia as well as from other regions, e.g., Anglophone and Francophone Africa, Latin America in June 7-12, 2008 the participation of women in the Asia Regional Workshop on the Implementation of the UNDRIP held in the Philippines was ensured through the AIWN where a back-to-back meeting was held to discuss the planned AIWN 3rd Conference. 