

**COLLECTIVE STATEMENT OF TEBTEBBA FOUNDATION, ASIA
INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S NETWORK AND CORDILLERA PEOPLES'
ALLIANCE**

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**Agenda Item: 4 (Health)
19 May 2004**

Mr. Chairperson,

If we look at the Millenium Development Goals, all of these are directly related to health. If these are achieved there is no doubt that the health situation of indigenous peoples will improve.

The goal to reduce poverty by half in the year 2015 and the goals for education, water and sanitation, reducing child mortality and improving maternal health, ensuring environmental sustainability, among others, are all health-related.

Yesterday, there was a side event sponsored by the UNDP on localizing the MDGs, and we stated that as much as we want and will exert our utmost efforts to achieve these at the local level, the global and national obstacles should be seriously addressed. One example of these obstacles, is the debilitating debt problem of many developing countries. Because of this health services are becoming more scarce and inaccessible. Debt conditionalities which include the privatization of basic social services such as health, education, and water services is another obstacle.

The General Agreement on Trade of Services (GATS) and TRIPS (Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) Agreement of the WTO are global agreements which push for privatization of social services and environmental services and which allows for patenting or traditional medicinal plants and traditional knowledge. The Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health which allows for easier production and access to essential medicines was won because of the fight done by NGOs, indigenous peoples, and developing country governments in Doha.

On the other hand, while health services are becoming more inaccessible and inappropriate, the brain drain of our health professionals is presently at alarming levels. Our biggest export, aside from primary natural resources are nurses, doctors, and caregivers.

In this light, we recommend the following:

1. That the Permanent Forum commissions a study to look into the MDGs and see how these can be particularized for indigenous peoples. This should include looking at the obstacles and constraints at the local to global levels and recommendations to deal with these obstacles.

We prepared a paper for the UNDP on the “Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples on the MDGs” and the PF study should build on this.

2. That the Permanent Forum requests the UN Development Group, which includes WHO, to make a report on how they are addressing the MDGs with particular focus on indigenous peoples. Next year will be the five years review of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs and it will be an opportune time to submit a report on an indigenous peoples’ assessment of what has been achieved.

When the Secretary General spoke to us at the opening plenary , he mentioned that he visited Indigenous Peoples in Latin America. As a follow up to this meeting, the UN Department of Political Affairs recommended that the linkage between indigenous issues and development work needs to be strengthened as “ indigenous groups are at the bottom of the scale in Latin America with regards to the MDGs.”

3. That the Permanent Forum in the next session requests governments to present failure and success stories in how they are addressing and supporting indigenous peoples’ health issues. For instance, the program in Cuba where the Latin American School of Medicine is training indigenous health professionals from other countries and ensuring that they go back to their communities is worth sharing.

This can include reports on how they are realigning their budgets to put more on social services for indigenous peoples, and how they are decisively addressing the debt problem. We feel that there is not enough political will on the part of governments both from the North and South, and from the international and multinational banks to address this in spite of the recommendations from the World Summit on Social Development and the Financing for Development Conference in Monterrey.

4. Finally, we support earlier recommendations asking the Permanent Forum to convene a technical meeting to bring together WIPO, WTO, UNCTAD, WHO, governments, and indigenous peoples. This will look into how indigenous peoples can ensure control over their traditional knowledge in the area of health, which includes traditional medicines. In addition, it will include how indigenous healers are being supported by governments.