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**Indigenous Peoples: Connectivity Initiatives in the Americas
in relation to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society
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Indigenous Peoples: Connectivity Initiatives in the Americas in relation to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) took place in Geneva from December 10 to 12, 2003. Within the context of the preparatory process, one of the civil society groups identified as important stakeholders is Indigenous Peoples. Approximately 400 million people worldwide are considered Indigenous.

UN General Assembly Resolution 56/183 describes the purpose of the Summit as being the "development of a common vision and understanding of the Information Society and the adoption of a declaration and plan of action for implementation by Governments, international institutions and all sectors of civil society". This provides a framework for considering the following points and questions:

I) Providing access to ICTs for all: *How can the benefits of affordable ICTs be extended to all the world's inhabitants? How can those that have access to ICTs be helped to use them effectively?*

II) ICTs as a tool for economic and social development - and meeting the Millennium Development Goals:*The development of ICTs has implications for economic, social and cultural development. How can ICTs be leveraged to help promote the common goals of humanity, such as those expressed in the UN Millennium Declaration?*

III) Confidence and security in the use of ICTs: *The benefits of ICTs can only be fully harnessed if there is confidence that these technologies and networks are reliable and secure, and are not misused. What steps should be taken to build confidence and increase security?*

The Global Forum on Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society (GFIPIS), a four-day event held immediately prior to the WSIS, produced a formal Declaration of Indigenous Peoples on the Information Society and a Programme of Action.

Indigenous people called on the United Nations member states and agencies to put information and communications technologies (ICTs) into the service of economic and social development in their communities around the world.

The UN Permanent Forum is a 16-member panel carrying out a mandate, which covers economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights. It provides expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and to UN programmes, funds and agencies, and helps to raise awareness of indigenous issues within the UN system.

Under the umbrella of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), a large delegation of Indigenous experts and other consultants set in motion an agenda seeking to create solutions that will help Indigenous Peoples move forward in meaningful ways. Indigenous Peoples in partnership with other interest-holders were encouraged to

build their Programme of Action based on concrete partnerships with and between Indigenous Peoples, governments, private sector and financial institutions.

As stated by the UNPFII and fundamental to this process are the following underlying principles:

Acknowledging that:
(a). Indigenous peoples are some of the least connected people technology-wise in society;
(b). The Information Society is critical to the economic and social development of indigenous peoples;
(c). A special effort is required for governments, indigenous groups, private sector and international organizations to work together to raise awareness among policymakers and indigenous interest-holders regarding to benefits of and barriers to the Information Society.
(d). Local capacity building and development is crucial to the adoption of these new technologies within indigenous communities.

The Goal is to:
(a). Develop an internationally representative forum of indigenous connectivity interest-holders and partners (governments and international financial institutions) in tandem with and as an integral part of the World Summit on the Information Society.

The Objectives will be to:
(a). Increase awareness, share best practices and identify particular indigenous barriers/challenges to the information society;
(b). Ensure indigenous stakeholder participation and engagement within the WSIS process and deliberation;
(c). Identify key challenges, solutions and priorities to overcome the digital divide among indigenous peoples and communities;
(d). Provide an opportunity for indigenous peoples (especially practitioners and professionals in the field) to develop an indigenous declaration on the information society;
(e) Assist in the development of a two-year plan of action (built on positive partnerships with governments and financial institutions), as a path to Tunis in 2005.

According to the NGO Narrative Report on the Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society, Geneva 8-11, December 2003, prepared by doCip, Centre de Documentation de Recherche et d'Information des Peuples Autochtones,

"One of the most important issues is how Indigenous Peoples can control the process of ICT introduction and use in their daily lives, and how they can use ICT in culturally appropriate ways, rather than be consumers dependent on the dictates of external funders. This raises the question of how traditional culture and ICT can be combined. Is ICT a useful tool to be integrated into traditional culture, education, and way of life to preserve Indigenous cultures (for instance archiving vanishing knowledge); or does it lead to erosion of tradition, values, identity, language, and ultimately assimilation into the mainstream? And how should Indigenous Peoples deal with mainstream content and produce their own content?"

This paper deals with some innovative examples involving Indigenous Peoples currently taking place, within the framework of both the private sector and international cooperation

for development and technology in the field of professional training, addressing e-learning and both rural and urban connectivity.

In most developing countries, Indigenous Peoples constitute the poorest of the poor. In the Americas, close to 50 million persons are Indigenous.

In the framework of the mandates of the Summits of the Americas, the Organization of American States has assigned a critical role to that which is referred to as the promotion and development of human resources in the Americas. The Third Summit of the Americas which took place in Quebec City in 2001, produced a Declaration and Plan of Action based upon three key themes, or baskets:

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Human Rights and Democracy
Creating Prosperity
Realizing Human Potential

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Chapter 16 of the Quebec Summit Plan of Action is devoted to Indigenous Peoples and places emphasis on special measures which are required to assist them in reaching their full human potential. "It is necessary to strengthen the participation of Indigenous peoples, communities and organizations, to promote an open and continuous dialogue between them and governments. Their inclusion throughout out societies and institutions is a valuable element in the continuous strengthening, not only of human rights in our hemispheric community, but also, more broadly, of our democracies, economies and civilizations."

In particular, as has been formally stated, "one can be assured that the OAS will promote access to high quality basic education in the region, as well as provide alternative educational methods to meet the needs of those segments of the population who are disadvantaged or excluded from formal educational systems."

The Inter-American Agency for Cooperation of the OAS established an Educational Portal of the Americas. This initiative provides the communities of the Americas, and in particular, those who inhabit remote areas with new opportunities to access education and capacity building programs.

In the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, the leaders of the hemisphere adopted the decision that information and communications technology is key to connecting *la gran familia* – the citizens of the Americas - and is a tool for the promotion of common values and collective objectives. Chapter 16/ Capítulo 16. Pueblos Indígenas ,of the Summit Plan of Action, addresses the issue of connectivity and Indigenous Peoples, as follows:

"Reducirán la brecha digital, de comunicación y de información entre el promedio nacional y los pueblos y las comunidades indígenas, mediante programas y proyectos de conectividad relevantes que proporcionen servicios en los campos del desarrollo político, económico y social, incluyendo el uso de las redes de información de los pueblos indígenas."

The process is taking shape through a variety of activities, some of which are driven by a new and dynamic group of Indigenous entrepreneurs.

An excellent example of the objectives of a private sector First Nations initiative in Canada is Mohawk Internet Technologies. According to Chief Joseph Norton, Grand Chief from the Kahnawake Mohawk Council, his company is committed to helping people get access. In referring to the Internet as the "eighth continent", at the WSIS Global Forum in Geneva, he called attention to ICTs' capacity as a tool for traditional learning and new vehicle for Indigenous Peoples' communication with each other, questioning how the Internet could be of use to people who have no electricity and are struggling to survive. Giving consideration to the possibilities of high level outcomes, he recommended that Indigenous Peoples should consider launching an Indigenous Peoples' satellite of their own. A whole new generation of aboriginal lawyers, environmentalists, practitioners of GIS and communications technologies are shaping the digital future of their communities in the North.

In terms of implementing the Summit Plan of Action and in some instances, supporting the Indigenous presence at the WSIS, several governmental and international development agencies, such as the Canadian government sponsored Aboriginal Canada Portal, the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas (ICA) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) have been involved in providing expertise in defining needs and developing solution-oriented policy.

In 2002, the Canadian International Development Agency established the Indigenous Peoples Partnership Programme (IPPP). The Programme aims to promote the establishment or reinforcement of partnerships between aboriginal entities in Canada and Indigenous entities in Latin American and the Caribbean.

The Institute for Connectivity in the Americas (ICA) is a major ICT initiative whose mandate is defined in the outcomes of the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, 2001. It is one of two major initiatives of the Canadian International Development Research Center (IDRC) and seeks to be a collaborative and interactive portal for public policy makers, entrepreneurs, community activists and digital leaders interested in using ICT to overcome the development gap in the Americas. It shares Canadian experience and knowledge, promotes partnerships, and thereby builds up capacities. Their guidelines indicate that funding is directed towards projects in the field of E-Strategies, Knowledge Networking and Innovation Demonstration.

Documentation on this topic places an emphasis upon helping the region play an active role in the information revolution. Partnerships between governments, the private sector, educational institutions, and civil society are essential for continued success. In addition to the above mentioned Canadian government agencies, ICA's partners include the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.

The policies and strategies of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) concerning Indigenous issues and ICT were presented at the UNGFIPIS. According to a widely accepted NGO summary of this event, Anne Deruyttere (Indigenous Peoples and Community Development Unit) and Maximilian Spiess (Information Technology for Development Division) identified different fields of Indigenous Peoples' needs, such as access and use of ICT, participation in E-Commerce, development of the new participation mechanism E-Government through ICT, and broader presentation of Indigenous culture. They explained why the IDB considers that Indigenous Peoples' need differential treatment

(geographic location of many indigenous communities, unique relationship with biodiversity and natural resources, need for increasing legal security and land tenure protection, democratization and decentralization processes, need to foster socio-culturally appropriate education processes, and need to preserve and strengthen cultural heritage.) IDB strategies seek to strengthen the cooperation between the two units, promote awareness within governments to include Indigenous Peoples' in their ICT strategy, and stimulate and assist Indigenous Peoples' in the presentation of projects in the ICT sector.

The World Bank's Global Fund for Indigenous Peoples was developed in response to a longstanding call by Indigenous Peoples' leaders for direct engagement with bilateral and multilateral agencies. It is the Bank's newest initiative and aims to directly assist Indigenous Peoples.

Speaking at the UN Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society, Jorge E. Uguillas Rodas of the World Bank's Global Fund for Indigenous Peoples, described how the program provides support to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, facilitates grants for Indigenous Peoples' communities and organizations, and supports implementation of sustainable development projects based on their own aspirations. The grants are intended to complement Bank-financed investment projects; these must be initiated, planned and implemented by Indigenous Peoples. Potential projects include health, education, social protection, capacity building, strengthening social capital, preservation of cultural heritage, language, identity and protection of customary land rights and intellectual property rights. One program the Global Fund is currently conducting jointly with the World Bank is the Andean Indigenous Leadership Capacity Building Program, in conjunction with the Fondo Indigena (Fondo para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina) which includes education modules in governance, development in accordance with identity, Indigenous rights, and ICT.

In spite of some state of the art advances in this field, there continue to be many major obstacles and disappointments to overcome, as noted by Marcos Matias Alonso, Member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and President of the Consejo Directivo del Fondo para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indigenas de America Latina.

Desde el Fondo Indígena hemos concluido un primer Balance y Perspectivas de las Agencias de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina. Puedo mencionar algunos datos relevantes del impacto de la ONU en América Latina: una década de dispersión, duplicidad y descoordinación entre las propias agencias y una limitada colaboracion con los pueblos indígenas; inexistencia de directrices para guiar el desarrollo indígena; nula integración de consultores y expertos indígenas; escasa información de los montos financieros invertidos lo que dificulta hacer una verdadera evaluación de impacto en las regiones indígenas.

En las agencies de cooperacion internacional hay tension entre cuatro tendencies institucionales para abordar el tema del desarrollo de los pueblos indigenas:

a. Las instituciones que los ven como grupos "vulnerables" o como minorias etnicas. Enfoque de la vulnerabilidad.
b. Los organismos que atienden la demanda indigena con la estrategia global de la lucha contra la pobreza. Enfoque de la pobreza.

c. Las instancias que privilegian la especificadad como pueblos indigenas. Enfoque indigena.
d. Los que siguen sin ver a los pueblos indigenas. Enfoque de la disciminacion.

Given these particular observations, it makes any advances in terms of "Indigenous Peoples" in the Americas that much more impressive. One of the affirmative initiatives that will provide Mexico's Indigenous Peoples with a unique educational opportunity is the creation of the first Universidad Intercultural Bilingue in San Felipe del Progreso. In addition, there are plans to create ten Indigenous universities in Oaxaca, Tabasco, Queretero, and Guerrero.

Although not specifically directed to the needs of Indigenous Peoples, a project developed by El Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos (IIDH) plans to construct the Inter-American Classroom for Human Rights (El Aula Interamericana de Derechos Humanos), and it will be interesting to see whether or not a virtual component will be implemented in order to provide significant professional training for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of rural communities.

The IIDH currently hosts the Inter-American Virtual Classroom. The courses are directed at persons from diverse sectors and fields of endeavor, who without any prior training in human rights and international protection systems, are interested in these subjects.

As institutions and community resources converge, one can anticipate that events such as the Primera Feria Hemisférica de Educación Indígena, held in Guatemala in 2001, will eventually be able to showcase significant outcomes based upon computer mediated learning within the framework of a large network of tele-centers in operation in Central America.

The Enlace Quiche project is a perfect example of work in this field. Located in the highlands of Guatemala, Enlace Quiche supports Indigenous driven connectivity projects pertaining to e-learning. Their vision is to provide the Mayan community with a quality education having linguistic and cultural pertinence, facilitated by an educational community that has at its disposal technology centers and abundant bilingual educational resources.

The Academy of Mayan Languages (Guatemala) and the Access to Bilingual Intercultural Education Project (Guatemala) produce context-based digital material for language education to provide students with knowledge of Mayan cosmology and cosmovision and teach language as an element of the overall cultural system. The software and materials can be contextualized in other languages. Enlace Quiche provides technical, administrative and coordinative support to the local partners. Some members of their team participated in the Global Forum on Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society in Geneva.

As cited earlier, representatives of Indigenous Peoples from all continents to the GFIPIS produced an Indigenous Peoples' Declaration and Programme of Action pertaining to their major needs and concerns which was presented for consideration to the World Summit. Ole Henrick Magga, a prominent Saami from Norway and the current Chairperson of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, speaking in a UN Press Conference, included the following points in his summary:

Our Declaration recognizes both obstacles to our full inclusion in the information society and good practices that are already creating bridges across our technologically divided world.

It is indeed difficult for Indigenous Peoples to afford ourselves the luxury of discussing the future when most of our peoples remain marginalized peoples without even the provision of such basic infrastructure as fresh water, sanitation, electricity or sealed roads.

However, our discussions this week have lead us to develop a Declaration that recognizes and applauds the advances made in bridging the information divide by initiatives of States and the private sector in partnership with Indigenous Peoples.

I want to make it clear that Indigenous Peoples hold States primarily responsible for our inclusion in the information society - Indigenous Peoples are part of your populations - not an add on problem - nor an after thought - and as such they deserve the equitable access to new technologies.

Having said that, they do not seek inclusion at the expense of their rights, cultural identities, traditional territories or resources. It must be indigenous peoples themselves, who decide on how and when they access and use new technologies.

The document also recognizes that some Indigenous Peoples of the developed world have built bridges with their brothers and sisters in the developing world - for Indigenous Peoples know that - little is gained if some of them advance and others are left behind.

The outcome, however, of the official UN Declaration and Programme of Action created by States failed to meet the expectations of Indigenous Peoples, as per their own Declaration and Programme of Action.

According to a press release issued by Yachay Wasi, an established NGO in this field, "Language in earlier drafts contained specific references to the right of Indigenous Peoples to fundamental freedoms and human rights protections had been deleted from the documents. In addition, references providing that Indigenous Peoples have the right to protection of their collective intellectual property and traditional knowledge had also disappeared from the current WSIS Plan of Action.

States have also deleted the term "Indigenous Peoples" from section C8 of the Plan of Action covering cultural diversity, identity, linguistic diversity and local content."

Mililani Trask, a Native Hawaiian lawyer, also a member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, having reviewed the final language coming out of the World Summit on the Information Society by member states of the UN noted "the deletion of vital provisions for Indigenous Peoples."

According to the summary of her statements during the press conference, "Most disturbing was the deletion of the text that would force States and the private sector to get the consent of indigenous peoples for the use and display of their traditional knowledge. These issues must be addressed in order to make the world a safe place for indigenous peoples. If the economic information and digital divide was to be bridged, information and communication

technologies must support true cultural diversity and preserve and promote the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples."

"Ms. Trask said indigenous peoples must be granted the right to self-determination, the right to their traditional lands and to their traditional heritage. She assured participants that despite the disappointment of the Forum, it would continue to work in good faith with States in the hope that the information society would become inclusive for all, including indigenous people."

What then are the strategies to be implemented which fully embrace a framework of partnership in action, as well as the Millennium Goals and Latin America with regards to Indigenous Peoples and ICTs?

In a recent study entitled Los Pueblos Indígenas y la Sociedad de la Información en América Latina y el Caribe: Un Marco para la Acción prepared in May, 2003 for the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas by Isabel Hernández and Silvia Calcagno, the "digital divide" is likened to another form of exclusion. What becomes apparent is that one has to take racism and other forms of discrimination into account when attempting to support mutually beneficial social and economic systems.

The authors and the statements of the afore-mentioned members of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues draw our attention to the need to dismantle the mechanisms of exclusion, suggesting that this must be a key focus of local and national governments and multilateral agencies.

Para estimular la llamada "oportunidad digital", debería existir un consenso capaz de unir las fuerzas gubernamentales con las de la comunidad internacional y de las asociaciones de la sociedad civil

In addition, many benefits accrue to Indigenous communities if they themselves are unified and pro-active in seeking a balance between their traditional cultural values and the challenges of playing a vital role in the information society.

Amongst the numerous recommendations suggested by Hernández and Calcagno, they suggest an "emphasis on two basic principals that guide the spirit of the social programs to conceive and implement: the principle of **self-determination** so that a community can play an active role in its own development and the principle of **self-management** as an instrument to learn the concrete tasks that require the gradual incorporation of the population and the Indigenous communities into the digitalization process."

"Entre los principales factores que excluyen a los grupos indígenas de la sociedad de la información están fuertes prejuicios culturales, altos costos de la infraestructura tecnológica en las áreas indígenas y el analfabetismo entre algunos grupos. Es esencial reducir la distancia cultural entre los grupos sociales y enfrentar el analfabetismo para incrementar la capacidad de los pueblos aborígenes de participar en la actividad cultural y lingüística. Para revertir la exclusión de los grupos indígenas de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (TIC), es importante también promover el acceso a la información organizada de acuerdo con los intereses y las necesidades de los usuarios indígenas."

A number of important recommendations are contained in a paper entitled: Regional Strategy for the Reduction of the Information Marginalization of the Indigenous Communities:

Revitalization of the ethnic and cultural identity of the Indigenous Peoples

Definition of a communication policy of significant impact, aimed at the reduction of ethnic discrimination and the digital divide

Revision of the rash defense mechanisms of the values and behavior of the peoples historically discriminated against

Self-affirmation of the ethnic identity and distinct culture of the Indigenous Peoples, in a scenario of self-management, all of above leading to a specific program for Indigenous access to the ICT's.

Las autoras son funcionarias del Centro Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Demografía (CELADE), División de Población de la Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL).

The beneficiaries, according to Indigenous Peoples, of the debates and outcomes of global mega-conferences and international cooperation programs are the next seven generations.

Indigenous Peoples want to ensure the survival of their nations, cultures and communities through the sharing of their knowledge for future generations, to provide education and training, not only for the future but also to address current problems. There needs to be a dialogue concerning technical and local knowledge because technology merely provides alternative options. Indigenous Peoples want to incorporate modern technology, but they do not want to lose or replace their knowledge.

The WSIS produced a The Declaration of Principles: Building the Information Society: a global challenge in the new Millennium which presents a common vision of the Information Society for all young people, making a global commitment for the empowerment of young people as learners, developers, contributors, entrepreneurs and decision-makers. Governments further agree to focus on young people who have not yet been able to benefit fully from the opportunities provided by ICTs and agree that in the development of ICT applications and operations of services that the rights of children, as well as their protection and well-being be respected.

Conclusion

The Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society examined both potentials and obstacles to the full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples in the Information Society.

Obstacles included (but were not limited to), lack of basic community infrastructure, limited access to modern technologies and the urgent need for gender and age sensitive capacity building.

Potentials included (but were not limited to) access to new market-places, increased indigenous networking (both regionally and internationally), new strategies to revitalize and pass on culture and languages, and the opportunity to fully participate in the new information and connectivity revolution facing humanity.

The official UN WSIS Declaration of Principles specifies that in the evolution of the Information Society, particular attention must be given to the special situation of Indigenous Peoples, as well as to the preservation of their heritage and their cultural legacy. With regards to international and regional cooperation, the WSIS Declaration of Principles made the following commitments in Item 11:

60. We aim at making full use of the opportunities offered by ICTs in our efforts to reach the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and to uphold the key principles set forth in this Declaration. The Information Society is intrinsically global in nature and national efforts need to be supported by effective international and regional cooperation among governments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders, including the international financial institutions.

61. In order to build an inclusive global Information Society, we will seek and effectively implement concrete international approaches and mechanisms, including financial and technical assistance. Therefore, while appreciating ongoing ICT cooperation through various mechanisms, we invite all stakeholders to commit to the "Digital Solidarity Agenda" set forth in the Plan of Action. We are convinced that the worldwide agreed objective is to contribute to bridge the digital divide, promote access to ICTs, create digital opportunities, and benefit from the potential offered by ICTs for development. We recognize the will expressed by some to create an international voluntary "Digital Solidarity Fund", and by others to undertake studies concerning existing mechanisms and the efficiency and feasibility of such a Fund.

62. Regional integration contributes to the development of the global Information Society and makes strong cooperation within and among regions indispensable. Regional dialogue should contribute to national capacity building and to the alignment of national strategies with the goals of this Declaration of Principles in a compatible way, while respecting national and regional particularities. In this context, we welcome and encourage the international community to support the ICT-related measures of such initiatives.

63. We resolve to assist developing countries, LDCs and countries with economies in transition through the mobilization from all sources of financing, the provision of financial and technical assistance and by creating an environment conducive to technology transfer, consistent with the purposes of this Declaration and the Plan of Action.

64. The core competences of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in the fields of ICTs—assistance in bridging the digital divide, international and regional cooperation, radio spectrum management, standards development and the dissemination of information—are of crucial importance for building the Information Society.

The Road to Tunis: 2005

The second phase of the WSIS will take place in Tunis in 2005. Looking ahead to that process, and in response to the official Declaration of Principles, Ole Hendrick Magga of the

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues re-iterated the need to ensure that further gains for Indigenous Peoples are made on the Road to Tunis in 2005. He said that the main barriers are resources, infrastructure, capacity building and access.

"In asking for inclusion in the Global Revolution of New Technologies, Indigenous peoples say strongly, that they are not simply another marketplace - to be exploited for financial gain. "
Above all, they ask for inclusion in this revolution on their own terms as equal players, for they believe that they have much to offer the rest of the world in terms of new thinking and approaches to the great possibilities of this new age.

Further to this, they also ask for inclusion at the WSIS in Tunis as equal partners – sitting at the main table. "In Tunis, we do not want to be a side event in a different location from the main meeting."

The research and outcomes presented in this paper have led to an understanding that in terms of international cooperation and development, real participation happens when all stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples are involved in decision-making. Experts have concluded and Indigenous Peoples themselves have reminded us that traditional Indigenous knowledge is an immense contribution to the wealth of all humanity and should be considered as part of the solution to problems in the world.

The Indigenous experience for more than 500 years has been that they are here but we haven't seen them. Their needs as articulated in Geneva require a shift in perception, one that no longer continues to qualify them as marginal and vulnerable groups but welcomes them instead, as peoples and nations into the global family.

The challenge facing multilateral agencies and member states of the United Nations is to recognize the self-determination of Indigenous peoples. This is crucial to inclusion in the information society.

In closing, I offer an excerpt from their Final Report to the governments of the world:

"At the heart of our vision of the Information Society is respect for the dignity and human rights of Indigenous Peoples, nations and tribes, which must be affirmed, if the economic, information and digital divide which separates technology rich nations and the private sector from the most marginalized peoples in society including Indigenous Peoples, nations and tribes, is to be bridged."

I ask those of you here today, is it a realistic expectation during the next few months on the road to Tunis, that many of the international cooperation agencies in the Americas, some of whom are present in this gathering at Virtual Educa in the Universal Forum of Cultures in Barcelona, will seek to further strengthen their capacity building programs in new and/or continuing dialogue and co-creation with Indigenous experts in order to secure significant advances in the implementation of jointly stated goals? Can Tunis be a win/win situation for all stakeholders, driven by the social, economic and political will of the Americas?

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Partners, including the Inter-American Development Bank, The World Bank, etc.
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