Plan of Action of the Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society

GENEVA DECLARATION

11 December 2003

Following are suggested courses of action to improve indigenous connectivity and equitable access to the new information society, on the Road to Tunis in 2005.

Economical and Social Development:

Indigenous peoples are interested in building partnerships with other indigenous peoples, States, the international system (including financial bodies), and the private sector to:

• Ensure regular and sustained support for isolated indigenous communities, so they can maintain connectivity;
• Build partnerships that are crucial for the establishment and sustainability of community connectivity, especially through funding/resourcing and training;
• Promote cooperation among those who have access to new technologies and those who do not;
• Ensure that Indigenous peoples who have access to new technologies can share their skills in such areas as advertising (for trade of indigenous communities) with those who do not.
• Ensure ICTs are made available to communities on the basis of equity and are accessibility to all.
• Recognize the potential of the Internet for indigenous peoples to promote their own culture and history beyond economic profit.
• Explore possibility for an indigenous satellite.
• Assist Indigenous communities to explore and develop technologies themselves.
• Explore e-commerce applications which are very important for indigenous enterprises in assisting them to develop a needs analysis, a business plan, and develop partnerships and plan how to sustain their e-commerce projects.
• Establish a worldwide indigenous association of indigenous organizations and businesses that have made the leap to connectivity, so that they can assist and make this technology available to indigenous communities who are not yet connected.
• Raise awareness about the necessity of satellites to accomplish any form of communication in remote areas;
• Promote radio/wireless as cheaper and better strategies for small communities.
• Raise awareness of appropriate technologies for the local situation and such issues as the use of landlines, which are very expensive but work better in large communities.
• Fund capacity building in communication projects for indigenous communities, prioritizing access by youth, women and Elders.
• Access to information for indigenous women and indigenous youth and projects for capacity building.
• Assist indigenous peoples to decide what ICTs they need and assess what education is needed to have access to the knowledge of this new technology.
• Develop computer software in indigenous languages that allow indigenous peoples to write in their own languages and to expand the use of computers in communities where indigenous languages are still in common use.
• Properly resource indigenous peoples to allow their full participation in the information society.

Culture and Education

Indigenous peoples are interested in building partnerships with other Indigenous peoples, States, the international system (including financial bodies), and the private sector to:
• Assist indigenous media in transmitting information (through print, audio and video) without excessive cost.
• Adapt information technologies to the needs of indigenous communities.
• Assist indigenous peoples to publicize their realities, recognizing that indigenous peoples should decide what should be published and what should not.
• Develop and promote ICT projects that motivate all young learners (including indigenous youth) to understand other cultures and also to take part in the preservation of their own cultures.
• Promote education and capacity building about information technology to ensure that indigenous peoples can utilize it effectively and appropriately.
• Ensure that relevant UN bodies including the UNPFII, WIPO, and UNESCO should work together on these issues to ensure that these issues (that are cross-cutting) are adequately addressed, recognizing that no single UN body has a mandate that allows for the comprehensive addressing of these issues. Such a partnership should encourage complimentary in addressing these issues.
• Produce a secure database portal of Indigenous languages written and oral.
• Create educational programs, where indigenous students can be trained to improve their technical skills.
• Assist indigenous peoples to develop our own strategies of communications.

Environment

Indigenous peoples are interested in building partnerships with other indigenous peoples, States, the international system (including financial bodies), and the private sector to:
• Ensure that ICTs, including satellite dishes, should not be placed on indigenous lands or territories unless the free, prior and informed consent of the Indigenous Peoples of those territories have been secured.
• Establish procedures concerning the placement of ICT equipment on Indigenous peoples lands that require widespread advertisement and notification, to ensure that the Indigenous Peoples belonging to those territories are fully informed and that their free and prior informed consent is obtained prior to any work commencing.
• Ensure that indigenous peoples fully participate in environmental and cultural impact assessments on their indigenous territories (lands, waterways, airspace, seas and oceans) before any ITC construction takes place and that construction relating to ICTs whether on land or in the seas should not be undertaken where there is a negative environmental or cultural impact.

Health
Indigenous peoples are interested in building partnerships with other indigenous peoples, States, the international system (including financial bodies), and the private sector to:

• Develop and implement indigenous specific health strategies at both community-level, regional, national and international levels.
• Ensure that High tech health care enhances and build on traditional ways of healing.
• Allow indigenous peoples, through their indigenous evolutionary processes to find their own uses for modern technologies, through capacity building and learning about its potential.
• Work with indigenous communities, to assist them in identifying what improvements are needed firstly in their health care, before they can identify how technology can help in other areas.
• Ensure that (recognizing the under-resourcing of indigenous health in many countries) moneys saved through high tech health delivery are redirected back into other indigenous health areas.

Human Rights

Indigenous peoples are interested in building partnerships with other indigenous peoples, States, the international system (including financial bodies), and the private sector to:

• Acknowledge that this Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society - Programme of Action is built on the previous precedents of World Conferences, noting the unqualified use of the term indigenous peoples in the Johannesburg Declaration and the relevant recommendations made at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.
• Recognized that Indigenous peoples were identified as vulnerable groups by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and as peoples, suffer multiple forms of discrimination. In particular, indigenous women were at the intersectionality of race and gender discrimination. Therefore, particular attention should be given to the negative uses of modern technologies to promote and proliferate racial hatred, discrimination, gender bias and stereotyping. As the World Conference recommended, special measures should be adopted to address discrimination against indigenous peoples.
• Develop special measures to include marginalized segments of society including Indigenous peoples, and to ensure that they are not further marginalized by the information society.
• Ensure that the right to freedom of speech is exercised without any discrimination.
• Develop a code of conduct for the use of the information society, encouraging respect and promotion of cultural diversity.

Traditional Knowledge

Indigenous peoples are interested in building partnerships with other indigenous peoples, States, the international system (including financial bodies), and the private sector to:

• Ensure that international organizations, including WIPO and other bodies, dealing with issues of relevance to Indigenous peoples and the information society, develop effective participation mechanisms to allow full and effective participation of indigenous peoples, including travel grants for regional representatives to participate in relevant meetings.
• Assist Indigenous Peoples in exploring *sui generis* legislation to protect their collective intellectual property rights.
• Raise awareness with UNESCO that it needs to consider more effective protection mechanisms for cultural heritage.
• Promote to the theme of Traditional Knowledge protection with the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues as their special theme for their 2005 session.