

Statement by the Indigenous Peoples Major Group (IPMG)  
PrepCom for the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction  
July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Geneva  
Delivered by Galina Angarova, Organizing Partner for the IPMG

Dear Co-chairs, member states, major groups and other stakeholders,

I present on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group and Tebtebba, an indigenous peoples' global policy, research, education and resource center. I would like to congratulate you on your work and efforts to bring together various stakeholders in order to identify best solutions and synchronize efforts with other processes such as SDGs, post 2015 development agenda and UNFCCC.

Indigenous Peoples represent over 370.000.000 million people and occupy 20% of global land. We are the guardians of the Mother Earth but we like no other group are vulnerable to the changing climate conditions and prone to the impacts of disasters. From the sea ice in the Arctic to the coast line of the Philippines, Indigenous Peoples often times find themselves on the front lines and carry the burden of the world's contribution to climate change and associated disasters. We strongly urge to link DRR to SDGs, and specifically on poverty eradication. Poverty and marginalization multiplies impacts of disasters on IPs. Recent studies show that in low income countries while the economic loss is relatively low the loss of human lives is very high. Given the fact that the majority of IPs are concentrated in low income countries, and the fact that IPs constitute 15% of the most poor while being only 5% of the world population, these numbers show disproportionate pressure on Indigenous Peoples in terms of impacts of natural and human-induced disasters. Following the process on SDGs, we are glad to see the inclusion of the target 1.5 under poverty eradication: by 2030 build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations to disasters, shocks and climate-related extreme events and we hope this target remains in the subsequent version of the zero draft.

We are glad to see the inclusion of civil society and other stakeholders in the process as it is important to hear many perspectives and voices to find the best solutions. We urge you to recognize that Indigenous people are the key stockholders and must be fully and effectively involved in the process of mitigation and adaptation to climate change and disaster risk reduction, with a rights-based approach. Indigenous Peoples should be considered as not just beneficiaries but as active participants in the design of strategies for adaptation and DRR. However, we keep facing that the problem of full and effective participation in decision-making, including the United Nations, Arctic Council and other global and national meetings. I would like to emphasize the importance of inclusivity and consultations with IPs in all stages of the development and formulation of targets, indicators and national policies for DRR, and we wish to reiterate our call to include the right to Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) in all the climate change and DRR processes and decisions, in accordance with International obligations and instruments, such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous

Peoples (UNDRIP) and ILO Convention 169. We would also like to stress the importance of informal discussions between PrepComs and the multi-stakeholder approach to the process and ask for inclusion of IPs in these discussions.

Secondly, I would like to bring to your attention to climate related disasters, which are exacerbated by this century's gold rush for fossil fuels, oil and gas exploration, construction of development projects such as large hydro dams and infrastructure, all leading up to the increased risk and vulnerability of IPs. Some of the critics say that there is no direct correlation b/n industrial development and disasters, however, there a vast field of knowledge and data gathered in the past decade proving that industrial activity is significantly contributing to the intensity and scope of natural disasters and a major cause for the majority of human-induced disasters. In cases in large hydro dams, for example, scientists found that they cause changes in rivers' hydrology and temperature which in its turn cause changes in temperature and flows in the oceans with the consequences of formations of unusually powerful and devastating typhoons and hurricanes, such as the one happened in Philippines in November of 2013 that devastated IPs.

With this, we would like to raise concerns over the fact that both SDGs and the DRR processes seeks as one of the solutions to implementation - partnerships with the private sector, the same sector responsible for much of the contribution to the human caused disasters. We understand that not all private sector entities are the same, but we urge that the public sector does not delegate the responsibility and that the private sector illustrates responsible leadership and extends hand for partnership based on basic human rights principles. We are not against the private sector per se, we are asking for appropriate safeguard systems and participation in decision making and consultation in regards to DRR program financing and implementation.

Thirdly, I would like to point out the role of Traditional Knowledge systems in developing strategies in DRR. Indigenous peoples around the world have used their traditional knowledge to prepare for, cope with and survive disasters. Their methods and practices have originated within their communities and have been maintained and passed down over generations. Until recently, policy makers have largely ignored this vast body of knowledge, in favor of “Western” science and technology-based methods of disaster risk reduction and response. We need to promote effective sharing of information, knowledge, and research and combine local, traditional, and western science perspectives. As indigenous knowledge comes from an intimate relation with the natural environment, communities have learned to read the signs in the sea, the rain, the wind, clouds, vegetation and wildlife to predict hazards. These local, experiential, “early warning” systems are frequently credited with saving lives and property. There is a need, now, to engage world leaders of indigenous peoples interested in risk reduction, together with their non-indigenous counterparts, in an ongoing dialogue aimed at understanding risks -- those that are unique to indigenous peoples and those shared in common with vulnerable communities throughout the world. **We urge that the outcome document of the WCDR includes effective**

**approaches to reduce risk to disasters through engaging IP leaders and their communities in appropriate studies, documentation of indigenous knowledge and practices for DRR, inclusion of traditional knowledge and coping mechanisms in national, regional and local disaster preparedness and post-disaster plans, with a goal of reducing their vulnerability and increasing their resilience to these events.**

**Finally, we are asking for inclusion of targets and indicators on preparedness and prevention for those who are most impacted by loss and damage, including IPs.** Unfortunately, the occurrence of hazards can not be avoided, but with proper measures impacts of disasters can be significantly reduced, therefore preparedness and prevention are crucial. For indigenous communities who live in location of high probability of disasters, **these targets translate into provision of financial and material support in preparing for disasters such as hauling materials, stocks of food, camp beds, medicine, gas or an emergency power generators.** It is important to note that it is the responsibility of national governments, specifically on the municipal and local levels, therefore these targets should be well formulated in national plans worldwide with Indigenous Peoples participation and consent.