

Professor Henry Minde

Forum for Development Cooperation with Indigenous Peoples:

'Welcome and Background for the Conference'

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen! Good morning and welcome to you all! I hope you will have an interesting stay in Tromsø.

This session is organized by the Forum for Development Cooperation, and in cooperation with the University of Tromsø, which includes The Maya Competence Building program, the Nicaraguan Cultural Revitalization and Resource Management Program and Norwegian Church Aid.

First and foremost I will welcome our overseas guests from Nicaragua, Guatemala and the United States. Further I will mention the people from NORAD, the NGOs indigenous and non-indigenous people, men and women, and of high importance are the students following the Master Program in Indigenous Studies at our University. We are succeeding in meeting one of the objectives of the forum. This forum is meant to be a meeting place for academics and activists.

The establishment of this Forum came as a package from the Ministry of Foreign affairs six years ago which was called "*plan for the follow-up with indigenous peoples as part of development assistance*". The funding for this forum comes from NORAD, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the University of Tromsø and Norwegian Church Aid.

The organizing of the Conference is as usual in the hands of the capable people at the Centre for Sámi Studies.

The board has up to this conference consisted of Sidsel Saugestad, Kristin Jernsletten, Georg Henriksen from the University of Bergen and IWGIA, Hans Petter Hergum of Norwegian Church Aid, Leif Halonen from the Sámi Council and myself. Very regrettable Georg Henriksen has been forced to leave the board because of illness.

Each year we have selected a special topic for examination at the forum:

- On the first conference, four years ago the topic was competence building and indigenous peoples;
- Three years ago the focus was on the European Union for strategies of support for indigenous peoples;
- Two years ago we focused on the UN system and international human rights involvement for indigenous peoples at some spot places around the world;
- Last year's conference was focusing on the role of indigenous women.

This year the conference will focus on "Globalization, Cultural Resources and Indigenous Peoples". To give us an overview of the subject matter of this broad field I will welcome **Russel Barsh**, who is Director at the Centre for the Study of Coast Salish Environments in Anacortes, the state of Washington in the United States. He combines both the activist and academic in one person. He is one of the most prominent and prolific writers and scholars on indigenous peoples in international law among other things. He has been law consultant for many First Nations peoples in the United States and Canada from 1970s, and he actively participated in framing the ILO Convention 169. I look forward to listen to how trade and intellectual property rights affect indigenous peoples.

The sub-themes are this year two:

1) "Globalization and Indigenous Peoples: Poverty and Education"

Data from the United Nations published in 2003 reveals that in Guatemala 87% of the indigenous population is poor, as compared to 54% of the non-indigenous population, that ratio in Mexico 80 % vs. 18%, in Peru

79 % vs. 50 %, while in Bolivia 64% vs. 48 % (UNICEF News Note, November 2003). But according to indigenous peoples such numbers are seldom available because what is presented is the general average. Referred to indigenous peoples, that makes them invisible.

The last years meeting in Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues stated accordingly that it was “*concerned that, unless the particular situation of indigenous peoples are adequately taken into account*” their situation would deteriorate even more since they are the poorest of the poor.

Thus, the sub-theme is of current interest with regard to the Millennium Development Goals most exposed is: “Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger”, and also, another goal: “Achieve universal primary education”. The problem of poverty and education is, of course, intermixed, an aspect which will also be depicted by the speakers who will focus on Nicaragua and Guatemala.

A very special welcome to the speakers from the University of Tromsø’s co-operative universities in Meso-America. That means the Urraccan in Nicaragua and San Carlos in Guatemala.

Urraccan in Nicaragua:

- **Mr. Ray Hooker**, a leading Nicaraguan scholar within the Atlantic region of Nicaragua and one of the founding fathers of the Urraccan University
- And Mrs. **Alta Hooker**, a founding “mother” and rector of that university;
- **Arja Koskinen**: “Intercultural Multilingual Education for the indigenous and afrocaribbean people on the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua - challenging the globalization”
- The Master student in Indigenous Studies, **Erika Satta**, will speak about indigenous language revitalization.

About Guatemala:

- Professor **Kay Warren** at Brown University, US has as a researcher followed the development of the Mayan movement in Guatemala from the early 1970s. And lately it is interesting in our context to know that she is studying the Development Aid from Japan to the Latin-American countries. At this conference she will evaluate the prospect for democracy and social justice.
- The former vice-minister of education in Guatemala and an outstanding Mayan academic, **Demetrio Cojti**, will describe the problems of the higher education in relation to the indigenous peoples.
- The Director of *Instituto de Estudios Interétnicos* **Eduardo Sacayón**, who is now a Visiting Fellow at the University of Austin, will talk about the higher education and multicultural society of Guatemala.
- **Georges Midré**, Professor, University of Tromsø: ‘Education and Poverty Reduction’.
- The Master student in Indigenous Studies, **Pablo Rangel**, will talk about the History of the ILO Convention 169 concerning Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala.
- The Master Student in Peace Studies, **Juliana Turqui**; University of Tromsø speaks about Indigenous Workers in Guatemala City and the Mayan Movement.

We welcome as well two prominent scholars from outside our co-operative institution who have different kind of experience about the recent development in Guatemala. In addition, we also welcome other scholars and master students present here today who have participated in NUFU supported cooperation between Urraccan University in Nicaragua and San Carlos.

2) “Cultural Resources Documentation and Mapping”

Documentation of culture and “cultural resource documentation and mapping” are very important in connection with ownership and rights to own history, traditions, identity, land and culture. A huge cultural land mapping program is going on in Southern Africa and partly this will be presented at this conference. Culture is not only important, but it is also believed that personal development depends on recognizing and honoring one’s own specific identity and heritage. Therefore it is of great importance to pay attention to various cultures when working with indigenous target groups as we shall see from the following presentations:

- **Hans Petter Hergum**, Norwegian Church Aid: “A Culture and Heritage Program - an Example from Southern Africa”
- **Liv Skaare**: “Behind the Pictures - Encounters with Paintings from the Kuru Project”
- **Karine Rousset**, Kuru Family of Organization: “Mapping as Development Tool - Experiences and Lessons Learnt through Mapping and Cultural Programmes of Kuru”
- **Anetta Bok**, ‡Khomani San (South-Africa): “Mapping in the Sand - The Experiences of the ‡Khomani with Mapping in the Trans Kalahari Transfrontier Park that Led to a Successful Land Claim”
- **Collin Tshima**, Chairman of the ‡Heku Trust, Chairman of the Regional WIMSA Board (Working Group for Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa): “Our Land is Our Life - The NG 13 Project in Northern Botswana”

Finally, we will have a session that we called “Forum Update”, which provides brief up- to-date presentations of current activities.

- **Lars Løvold**, Director, Rainforest Foundation Norway: “Culturally and Linguistically Tailor Made Education: an Important Element in the Fight for Indigenous Peoples Rights. Lessons from Brazil”
- The vicarious Director at the *Instituto de Estudios Interétnicos*, San Carlos University in Guatemala **Ángel Valdez** about ‘Capacity Building and University Co-operation. The Case of Maya Competence Building’.
- **Keitseope Nthomang**, University of Botswana and Coordinator, South, of the Collaborative Programme for San/Basarwa Research and Capacity Building: “Challenges for Minority Education and Capacity Building in Botswana”.
- **Hoeseb**, Inspector of Education, Otjozondjupa region (Namibia): “Government Commitment to San Education”
- **Svein Ørsnes** will inform us about the Namibia Association of Norway’s experience in their development aid.
- And likewise an up-date on the cooperation that Saami Council is currently involved in. These dialogues always bring us some new perspectives.

I hope this conference will consolidate the Forum as a meeting place for researchers, bureaucrats, development workers and Sami organizations engaged in a co-operation with indigenous peoples in the South.

Last but not least, I will thank NORAD and the University of Tromsø for financing the Forum conference as well as other Forum activities.

Most welcome and thank you!