



United Nations

## Indigenous People's Day 2012 Message from the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative

The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is observed on 9 August each year to promote and protect the rights of the world's indigenous population. It was first pronounced by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1994, marking the day of the first meeting of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights that had taken place in 1982. This day is a tribute to the achievements and contributions that indigenous people make to improve world issues by offering an alternative perspective on development models that all too often exclude the indigenous experience.

The focus of this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is "Indigenous Media, Empowering Indigenous Voices". All over the world, indigenous peoples are using the internet, traditional and social media to tell their own stories; to challenge misconceptions about their history and culture; to combat human rights violations; and to advocate for their rights and access to resources that will enable them to maintain their unique ways of life. Governments and the mainstream media should likewise create opportunities for indigenous peoples to articulate their priorities and aspirations. This year's theme of empowering indigenous voices is a timely one as we approach the end of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (2005-2014) that set 5 clear objectives, including:

- Promote non-discrimination and inclusion of indigenous peoples in international, regional and national processes.

- Promote full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in decisions affecting them.
- Re-define development from a vision of equality and in a culturally appropriate way-development with identity.
- Adopt targeted policies, program, projects and budgets for indigenous people's development.
- Develop strong monitoring mechanisms and accountability at the international, regional and national levels in relation to existing legal, policy and operational frameworks protecting indigenous peoples.

The Government of Bangladesh's support for plurality, equality for all, and full and effective participation, is clear from its commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and from its implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord. In partnership with the Government, CHT communities, and NGOs, UNDP is supporting the Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It supports the Government of Bangladesh, the institutions of the CHT, and local communities to pursue accelerated, sustainable socio-economic development and poverty reduction based on principles of local participation, and decentralized development.

Equally important, the Parliamentary Caucus on Indigenous Peoples, supported by the ILO, is another example of successful partnership involving the Government, the UN and civil society in promoting the rights of the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh. The Parliamentary Caucus on Indigenous Peoples identifies the challenges of marginality and vulnerability faced by indigenous peoples, represents their interests and finds ways to address these problems and needs in the parliament.

On the occasion of International Indigenous People's Day 2012, the UN in Bangladesh is pleased to support the observance of this day through the events organized by the Bangladesh Indigenous People's Forum which includes many awareness-raising activities and events to encourage public participation. Indigenous perspectives and priorities remind us of sustainable models of development that are increasingly important given the environmental challenges facing our planet. That which might have been deemed "alternative development" yesterday, is very much accepted as a mainstream priority today.

In this year's International Indigenous People's Day events, I hope participants will reflect on past achievements and anticipate how we can all work together with our indigenous brothers and sisters to create a society that values mutual respect, intercultural understanding and sustainable development.

Neal Walker  
UN Resident Coordinator  
and UNDP Resident Representative