

## **MOBILITY, LIVELIHOODS, CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ON MOBILE PEOPLES**

Fifth Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Side Event  
Monday May 22 2006 13:15-14:45,  
DC2 19<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room at Two United Nations

Chair: Mr William Lengeveld (Koi San, South Africa)

Co-sponsors:

The Standing Committee of the Dana Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation, Dr Dawn Chatty (Chair)  
World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP), Ms Aghaghia Rahimzadeh (Secretariat)

Mr William Langeveld, was appointed by the Secretariat of the UNPFII to chair ;this session, as a direct response to the invitation extended to the chair of the UNPFII by the Standing Committee of the Dana Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation. There were twenty representatives of mobile peoples sponsored by the Standing Committee present as well as an additional 26 other mobile and other peoples present. Once the setting space had been occupied, a number of people sat on the floor. Among those present was Ms. Ida Nicholaison, the Deputy Chair of the UNPFII.

The Chair asked Dr Chatty to open the session. Dr Chatty welcomed the audience on behalf of the Standing Committee of the Dana Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation and the Secretariat of the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples. This was followed by a few brief remarks giving a background and context to the Dana Declaration and the concern of some scientists practitioners and policy makers regarding the invisibility, marginality and continued discrimination of mobile peoples. The creation and adoption of the Dana Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation in Wadi Dana, Jordan in April 2002, under the sponsorship of HH Princess Basma of Jordan, was an attempt to forge a new partnership between conservation and development and mobile peoples in order to ensure the future of the earth's biodiversity, sustainable development while respecting the rights of indigenous and traditional communities which have been disregarded in the past. Dr Chatty then set out of the five principles of the Dana Declaration which she noted are as applicable in the context of conservation as well as sustainable development. These are: rights and empowerment of mobile indigenous peoples; encouragement of trust and respect for mobile indigenous peoples; the acknowledgement of different knowledge systems among mobile indigenous peoples; the recognition of adaptive management among mobile indigenous peoples, and the importance of working towards collaborative management with mobile indigenous peoples. She indicated that one of the main goals of this initiative is to promote a constructive debate about the future of mobile peoples in the context of sustainable development and conservation. The first few steps have been taken with the milestone endorsements of the Dana Declaration at the World Parks Congress, Durban 2003, and

the World Conservation Congress ( IUCN) in Bangkok 2004. The Standing Committee will work towards an endorsement of the Dana Declaration by a future session of the UNPFII.

Ole Simmel was the next speaker. He also welcomed the audience and then asked the fundamental didactic question: who is mobile. He then carefully reviewed the definition agreed by WAMIP based on the Dana Declaration of the term mobile peoples and its relationship to other terms such as nomad, pastoralists, indigenous, traditional. He restated the main aim of this session as being that of inform the UNPFII about the particular challenges and vulnerabilities of mobile peoples. He reiterated the lack of understanding of the term mobility and the up until now incomplete comprehension of the significance of mobility as the only known strategy for survival of people in arid and semi-arid zones. He reminded the audience of the creation of WAMIP at the World Parks Congress in Durban in 2003 to bring together mobile peoples. The key focus of WAMIP is to adapt friendly strategy and bring people to the centre of conservation. WAMIP wants people to understand the relationship between mobile indigenous peoples and conservation. He continued to point to an area of great difficulty: the inability of development specialists to understand that development does not need to be restricted to settlement. Those who are mobile can also be 'developed' without being 'settled'. With this message we have come to the UN community. He concluded by adding that as is common knowledge, Africa was colonized by the British, French, Italian. Thus ILO 169 has great relevance for us in defining ourselves as indigenous. In conclusion he stated that he hoped that the next session of the UNPFII would take up the topic of 'mobility' in their discussions next year.

The floor was next given to our representatives from Namibia who made the following statement.

We are the Himba Community and we are mobile indigenous peoples from Namibia. Our main sources of living are natural resources and livestock. Therefore it is important for us to maintain access to our natural resources (grazing areas).

1. We are concerned that the Namibian government wishes to build a dam at the Epouga Falls on the Kunene which borders on Angola and Namibia. We are opposed to this plan and have had long discussion with the government for nearly the last four years. As a result of these discussion and negotiations, the government has withdrawn the plan of building this dam.

We are now concerned as to whether the government might reverse its idea and reconsider building the dam.

We are against the project because of the following:

- a. it will damage our cultural heritage;
- b. it will damage or destroy our grazing areas for our livestock

recognized by the government. When land allocation issues are raised, they are undertaken by government Land Boards. We, the Himba, are excluded from these land decisions. Only then traditional leaders officially recognized by the government are represented in this Land Board.

We request that the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues assist the mobile Himba people to raise these concerns with the government of Namibia. This is requested in the spirit of protecting the human rights, cultural integrity and sustainable livelihoods of the Himba.

Then Ms Nina spoke making a brief statement:

You have summarized most of our concerns in our address and our aspirations in this process is to approach the UN agencies to put pressure on our governments in regard to the special issue of mobility. In our territories we have suffered from drought which has led to famine and poverty. It is very important to take on board the issue of sustainable livelihoods. In Africa, indigenous peoples and especially women are very rarely invited to participate in the management of natural resources. The central Shara is not considered a hot spot for international development. We believe that the process of decentralization of government is particularly beneficial for mobile indigenous peoples. With decentralization will come the recognition of particular mobile peoples with a recognized territory. We would like to see the support and ratification of the principles of the Dana Declaration.

The floor was then given over to Kurtaz Vasamalli who spoke on behalf of the Pancha Pandvas Toda Buffalo Breeders Association, Nilgiri, South India.

The Toda people are the indigenous inhabitants of the Nilgiri District of Tamil Nadu, South India. We moved with our livestock between Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. We have cultural rights in these areas. We have sacred places, cultural heritage, and pastural lands. Our villages are called 'mund' that is 'modr' in our language.

The Nilgiri Biosphere was the first protected area in India. It covers about 5,520 sq km. These protected areas were originally protected by Toda mobile indigenous and traditional peoples as part of their cultural practices. Semi wild water buffaloes are part of the Toda peoples' wealth and culture. We had thousands of acres set aside for grazing. Now these lands have been converted into Eucalyptus tree plantation and protected areas for wild animals. Often these wild animals prey on our semi-domesticated buffaloes as well as people.

Our ancestral land needs to be officially recognized and registered by the government and our ancient and rich language needs to be protected and preserved. The mobile indigenous Toda peoples have formed an NGO called the Pancha Pandavas Toda Buffalo Breeders Association which is entirely run by the Toda people. Our activities are also concerned with income generation for women through the development of handicrafts specific to the Toda people.

The Mongolian representatives spoke next.

We represent the Mongolian mobile pastoral herder communities. In the Gobi region community organizations have re-emerged during the late 1990s driven by the need to coordinate mobility of herder households. Community organization in Mongolia have triggered local innovations in self-organization, pastoral management and production, nature conservation and livelihood strategies. Community organizations are becoming acknowledged institutions for natural resource management and important actors in poverty alleviation, and local self-government.

The Gobi region where we live is part of relatively intact ecosystems from the northern forests to the arid desert in inner Asia. In the Gobi as in all dry lands, mobility and informal pastoral institutions are at the heart of sustainable resource management and livelihoods. The Gobi region is very rich in mineral resources. A large gold and copper deposit is currently being exploited. While this brings some employment opportunity and economic growth, it also opens the region and our mobile pastoral lifestyle to potential threats through the extractive industries' impact on water resources, pasture lands and illegal cross-border trade. In the wake of the discovery of this significant deposit unregulated mining as well as the issues of exploration licenses has increased. Local government and community organizations alike see themselves as being confronted by private holders of exploration licenses which impact on the grazing lands used by herding communities for their traditional livelihoods. The territory where these herder organizations are active is very small. Even then, the mining companies have already begun to intrude on these pasture lands, moving some families out of their traditional winter grazing areas.

We bring to the attention of the UNPFII that Mongolian mobile herders wish to extend and encourage collective action to establish more herder organizations; and

We wish to see the development of greater capacity building efforts for these mobile herder communities of Mongolia;

We wish to advocate for **Free, Prior and Informed Consent** to be a fundamental aspect of all regulations regarding future and mining licenses in Mongolia.

Then Francis Chachu Ganya spoke for the East African representatives and focused on the threats of drought to mobile peoples livelihoods. He reminded the audience that mobile peoples are historically dependent on natural resources. Central to their survival is a dependence on sustainably used natural resources. Mobility for grazing and herding of livestock is central to the Gabra people who practice several forms of mobility : sort range, long range, and cross border movements. Pack animals which are able to tolerate drought conditions, such as the camel are especially favoured. Mobile indigenous peoples are particularly flexible and able to live in harsh conditions.

The Gabbra Elder, Mr Adhi also added that The basic challenge facing his people is that drought is very erratic. People sometimes go many years without rain. The Gabbra has a camel culture with which they move from place to place. The second challenge we face after drought is the lack of basic necessities and mobile services. All government services are for sedentary communities. No services reach us from the government.

The representative for the Middle EaSt mobile peoples, Tarik Abulhawa, then spoke.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to your esteemed forum for giving us the opportunity to take part of this important global gathering as a group of representatives of mobile indigenous and traditional people from the Middle-East.

We highly appreciate the efforts made by WAMIP and the Standing Committee of the Dana Declaration to support and facilitate our presence today with the aim to raise our region's awareness about the challenges facing Mobile Indigenous Peoples; and

As our region hosted the elaboration of the Dana Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation thus establishing the guiding principles on Mobile Peoples in relation to development and conservation strategies around the world; and

Being aware that the term "Indigenous" incorporates in its wide definition Traditional and Local Peoples many of whom live in the middle-east region and thus preempting any misunderstanding, misinterpretation or political sensitivities related to the term which might hinder its adoption on national levels; and

Expressing our genuine concern towards the lack of representation of our region in UNFP II thus depriving it from being part of such an important global dialogue which tackles vital human rights and sustainable development issues; and

Emphasizing our intent and interest to work closely and in partnership with all national governments and local and international non-government agencies to promote the implementation of the principles set out in the Dana Declaration through global, regional and national strategies and action plans to achieve the positive changes and impacts on the policy and legislative frameworks which govern natural resource management in the region.

We, therefore express readiness to put all our efforts at the disposal of the Forum through WAMIP and the Dana Standing Committee and request that the UNFP II consider extending its influence and activities to the middle-east region and provide the support needed to raise the region's stakeholders awareness of Mobile Indigenous Peoples as well as their rights to sustain their livelihoods and maintain their freedom of choice.

In conclusion, we believe, the UNFP II will be instrumental in helping governments and other development agencies of the region recognize their responsibilities and obligations towards their Mobile Indigenous Peoples. The Forum could also support the region's

Mobile Indigenous Peoples to organize themselves and better represent and advocate for their rights and needs.

The main issues in the Middle East are: impact of development, undermining of traditional management systems, direct impact and influence of the changing lifestyles, sharing the costs and benefits; who shares the costs and who shares in the benefits; mobile people's access to decision making is limited; there is no common ground for the various parties to talk to each other; distribution of benefits; evidence of failure to manage conflict; favoritism in these programmes. Thus we would like to focus on: the re-establishment of the relationship between conservation and development; promote the adoption of transparency, and improve and enhance dialogue between conservationists and social scientists.

Thank you for your time and indulgence.

The Chair then opened the floor for audience participation

Importance of the principles of the Dana Declaration plus further emphasis on empowerment

## DISCUSSION

Ida Nicolaiassen Deputy Chair of the UN Forum

The situation of mobile indigenous peoples is a crucial issue we need to pay more attention to at the Forum. This includes transnational mobility which the next Forum needs to highlight

Also a point raised by Tarek that development agencies need to get much closer to the ground in understanding mobile livelihoods needs to be recognized. Development agencies have very limited idea of barriers to mobility. This needs to be overcome.

Harun Al Rashid, Niger

Discussed the situation in Niger where rainfall fluctuates between 0-700mm. Cross border mobility and camel pastoralism very important to the economy of Niger

Ferial (An-Noud)

Discussed the situation in Israel where 170,000 Bedouin live in the Negev of Israel. Forced settlement, recognized and unrecognized villages. Bedouin in Negev now sit on 3-5 % of their original land still face home demolition, crop poisoning, no recognition of their land claims.

Masaai elder

Ancient origins of pastoralism (not so sure of this – off-shoot of agriculture more likely) agro-production systems demonize pastoral systems. The challenge for nomads is to manage the conflict over access to resources.

Alu Ashfar Cameroons

Pastoralists evicted from their lands, rights often violated, torture. Schools and hospitals do not take into consideration nomadic lifestyles. Call on 'WAMIP to collaborate and find a way forward.

Sauodata

A member of the coordinating committee of WAMIP she put forward the idea that advocacy and partnership in managing the problems of nomads is vital. She indicated an example from West Africa where nomad – agricultural communities have been formed and both work together effectively.

Elizabeth from Kenya

Wildlife Service

She put forward two challenges to the organizers of the side event.

Two challenges:

1. inventory of mobile groups in the world in order to know how many there are
2. to co-manage conservation areas

Ole

In closing the session he indicated that the next Forum we should have a larger room with translation facilities. It should also take on board important cross-cutting issues as well as human rights. He indicated that now we need to ask: Where do we go from here; how do we manage with the UN reforms about to be put into place; what will happen when the working groups are phased out?

The Chair, William Langeveld, closed with the summary

The issues of mobile indigenous peoples will be taken up as an important issue with the Permanent Forum. The role of the PF is to listen and then to formulate as recommendations to ECOSOC. They then go to the world governments to respond.

He indicated pleasure with the inputs of the side event, inspired by the confidence of the speakers as well as their determination. Clear there was a need for MIPs and conservation groups to get together ( he gave an example of S Africa especially over the past ten years with increasing efforts at co-management of nature reserves and protected areas. [Conservation and MIP partnerships].

He then remarked on the importance of consultation and quoted Altan's phrase FREE, PRIOR and INFORMED CONSENT. He emphasized the importance of making linkages. Again reiterated that he will take up suggestions which have come out of the side event, rephrasing them into recommendations for ECOSOC.

He closed by congratulating all present for putting mobile indigenous peoples on the table of the UN System.

END note: In discussion with Ida Nicholaisen after the side event. She indicated that she was very impressed by the turn out for this side-event. She saw the issue of mobility and mobile peoples as a very important part of the FORUM which has been invisible until now. She indicated that she felt that it needed to be on the main forum agenda next year, not a side event. It would be urgent quickly get in a proposal for a workshop / session for next year's PFII around the issues of land and natural resources – something specific to mobile peoples. As the Secretariat is now setting the agenda, it is important that a recommendation be passed to her and to William Langevel so that they can campaign to put mobility on the programme next year.