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HOLY SEE CALLS FOR HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Underlines Cultural Liberty and Values of Indigenous Peoples

NEW YORK, APRIL 21, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The permanent observer of the Holy See at the United Nations is underlining the need for a holistic vision of development, especially regarding indigenous peoples.

Archbishop Celestino Migliore stated this Tuesday before the U.N. Economic and Social Council's 9th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The discussion centered on the theme of the development of indigenous peoples with culture and identity.

"The Holy See considers it fundamental to have a holistic vision of development which entails the well-being of the whole person and of the entire community and emphasizes in particular the dimension of cultural identity," the delegate stated.

He continued, "The traditional indigenous vision of development focuses on human development in its entirety and understands that the earth and environment are sacred and good for our use; these gifts, needed for human existence, should not be abused."

"A human rights-based approach to development that takes into account collective rights and the ethos of benefit-sharing that affirms their vital connection to their lands and territories needs to be promoted," the prelate asserted.

"In addition to the economic dimension, development must include also social, cultural and spiritual elements," he affirmed. "Their deep sense of religious consciousness, of family and of community cohesiveness and desire for living in a strong symbiosis with nature must be respected."

The archbishop clarified that "fostering indigenous culture does not mean always going back to the past."

Rather, he said, it "entails going forward maintaining traditionally transmitted values and principles."

Traditional values

"Indigenous culture is based on time-honoured and collective values," Archbishop Migliore affirmed, "enriched through the promotion of traditional ways of learning and transferring knowledge."

He continued: "Respect for human life and dignity, representative decision-making processes, the practice of justice mechanisms and ceremonies are important.

"In the face of modernization, industrialization and urbanization, these values must not be overlooked. This necessitates promoting understanding and respect for indigenous culture."

"Indigenous peoples must be able to choose their language, practice their religion, and actively participate in shaping their culture," the prelate asserted.

He underlined the importance of ensuring "cultural liberty as a human right of the indigenous peoples and respect for their ethnicity, religion, and language."

"In preserving their cultural heritage, promotion of indigenous languages and intercultural education is critical," the archbishop affirmed. "In this spirit, the Holy See promotes centers of indigenous languages, oversees compiling of grammar books and commissions hundreds of translations into those languages, often menaced by natural extinction."

The Holy See delegation underlined its commitment to "the promotion of cultural development, targeting the human and spiritual enrichment of populations."

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