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Statement submitted by VAAGDHARA, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Promoting Community Owned Solutions for sustainable development of Tribal Communities in Western India

Policies and actions that are framed following a top to bottom approach, sometimes fail to consider the real underlying issues of the problem and tend to address the superficial aspects of it. VAAGDHARA therefore emphasizes on promoting a strong community involvement in the planning process to come up with more pragmatic solutions to the felt needs. The Indigenous communities are a source of inspiration and they have multiple solutions for adapting to current and emerging challenges. It is always important to identify the best practices through the Participatory Approaches. The development of indigenous communities can never be solely in the hands of external stakeholders.

VAAGDHARA's approach in promoting community-owned solutions:

In order to promote the local solutions, VAAGDHARA has conducted a Tribal Sovereignty March reaching more than 10,000 individuals. The Sovereignty March focused on identifying the best practices through the participatory approach involving people from different age groups and backgrounds. The best practices which were identified through the process include the following:

Promotion of traditional farming practices — 'Farming practices that are eco-friendly, and sustainable in nature, acknowledge the traditional knowledge and wisdom, aim at curbing/totally ceasing the use of chemical fertilizers, and promote soil conservation. VAAGDHARA promotes Nutri-sensitive farming practices and Sustainable Integrated Farming Systems in order to deal with problems of malnutrition in the area and providing sustainable sources of farming. Tribal farmers adopting these approaches have had improved nutrition levels, especially among the women and children, have reduced dependency on the markets and have also enhanced their income levels through reduced input cost and increased productivity.

Establishing regular dialogue with the community through V-Chopal — To increase the knowledge and awareness among the community on the SDGs, VAAGDHARA has evolved an indigenous learning platform i.e. V-Chopal, for a regular two-way dialogue, where different development issues are discussed and the community members participate in the same. We believe, that an informed community is always more likely to assert its rights. In this platform, various strategies are discussed to achieve SDGs and the community is also provided with the solutions to their problems, which further provides them with a sustainable path of development.

Developing leaders within the community — In order to develop the leaders, VAAGDHARA is investing in building the capacities of youth, Community Leaders and Community Based Organizations, so that they can demand their entitlements and start the journey towards development. Awareness about schemes, programmes and rights can help the community explore its ultimate power for development of its upcoming generations.

VAAGDHARA and the SDGs:

To achieve the sustainable and equitable development for the indigenous communities, the organization has adopted the above-identified best practices and is making efforts to reach a large number of indigenous families in the Western part of India to promote these local solutions and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. There is a need to engage communities everywhere to make the United Nations 'Global Goals their local goals' and develop a sense of ownership and responsibility among communities.