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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **World Bank Affirms Support to Indigenous Peoples in Designing Climate Change Responses.**

*President says Indigenous People possess valuable experience and knowledge to be shared*

**WASHINGTON, November 18, 2009** –World Bank Group President **Robert B. Zoellick** today opened a roundtable discussion on *Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change* by saying that Indigenous Peoples carry a “disproportionate share of the burden of climate change effects.” Two weeks before the opening of a major United Nations conference on climate change, Zoellick went on to stress the importance of including those most affected by climate change in climate change debates.

Zoellick was speaking at the roundtable organized by the World Bank and First Peoples Worldwide, held at World Bank headquarters in Washington. The event brought together Indigenous Peoples Representatives from around the world as well as other non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and bilateral and international organizations to exchange ideas, forge partnerships, and create synergies to map the way forward for an Indigenous Peoples Climate Action Fund (IPCAF).

In his remarks, Zoellick said that “*climate change exacerbates the difficulties that indigenous communities already face – including loss of land and resources, lower human development indicators, discrimination, unemployment, and economic and political marginalization.*”

Indigenous communities, with their “*long experience in managing natural resources, and adapting to climate change,*” he added, “*can also add to our knowledge and understanding of how best to cope with this complex challenge ... learning from Indigenous Peoples will make our discussions richer and our actions more productive.*”

The Bank Group President cited several examples of how, in different parts of the world, the knowledge and experience of Indigenous Peoples is helping them to cope with some of the already inevitable impacts of climate change. In parts of Africa, he said, Indigenous Peoples have long made use of the dry land conditions – by growing Red bush tea, for instance. Women plant crops that are more resistant to droughts and pests, providing a reserve for extended periods of economic hardship. They preserve seeds that will ensure resistance to a range of conditions that may arise in a particular season or year.

In the Marshall Islands, Indigenous Peoples have found ways to use blocks of coral to protect fresh water supplies from salt water contamination. In Vietnam, indigenous communities plant dense mangroves along

the shores to protect the coastline – the mangroves diffuse incoming waves during tropical storms. And in Australia, Aboriginal communities are using traditional controlled burning to keep the undergrowth under control, helping to prevent giant fires that devastate entire landscapes and release massive amounts of carbon into the atmosphere.

The World Bank's Social Development Department assisted First Peoples Worldwide in designing the Indigenous Peoples Climate Action Fund (IPCAF). This innovative initiative aims to provide direct financing to selected indigenous communities around the world. The Fund will be used for several purposes:

- to document Indigenous Peoples' responses to climate change;
- to integrate local indigenous knowledge on climate change adaptation and mitigation into project designs and implementation and finally; and
- to strengthen the capacity of Indigenous Peoples' communities to influence decision-making and to engage in dialogue on climate change at the national and international level.

The Fund will be managed and implemented by First Peoples Worldwide - which has extensive experience in developing financial mechanisms to reach Indigenous Peoples - with the Bank playing an advisory role.

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