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PRESS RELEASE

Japanese Government contributes to the work of the ILO on indigenous peoples

JAKARTA (ILO News): The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations (UN) have signed an agreement to promote human security and reducing poverty among indigenous peoples in Papua, Indonesia. The Government of Japan will provide US\$1,537,965 to the Project through the UN Trust Fund for Human Security. The Project was prepared in close consultation with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). The Project will also work closely with the State Ministry for the Acceleration of Eastern Indonesia and other local organizations.

In Indonesia, the ILO Office in Jakarta had extensive consultations in Papua and at the national level and also liaised with other UN Agencies working in Papua Province. The Japanese Embassy in Jakarta was closely associated with the formulation process and provided valuable inputs. It is foreseen that Embassy officials will be involved in the launch and subsequent monitoring of the Project.

“This is a further opportunity for ILO to work with the Embassy of Japan in the programmes in Indonesia. Already the Embassy and the ILO Office in Jakarta are cooperating, for instance in their support to the post-Tsunami programme in Aceh Province, working both with the Ministry of Labour to provide vocational training programmes to the people rebuilding their lives in Aceh,” said Alan Boulton, Director of the ILO.

The three-year project responds to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable communities in Papua, Indonesia, as they are increasingly facing challenges to the human security situation and increasing poverty. The Project will primarily assist indigenous and migrant communities and local government agencies in Papua to reduce poverty and eliminate discrimination in employment and education, particularly among indigenous women and girls.

In addition, the Project will provide the indigenous communities with culturally-appropriate tools and methods to strengthen their capacities, aiming at creation of decent employment opportunities, sustainable livelihoods and income generation avenues. Through a community-driven participatory approach, the Project will also facilitate a dialogue and common agenda

between the indigenous communities, the migrant population and the local government authorities and thereby contributing to an improvement in the human security situation.

Papua is one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia. The 2004 Indonesia Millennium Development Goals report indicates that the percentage of people living below the national poverty line in Papua is 41.8%, and, compared to 18.2% for the whole country, it is quite high. Up to 74 % of the population comprises indigenous peoples, who live in isolated areas with little access to social and economic facilities and services to fulfil their most basic needs. With an illiteracy rate of 49 % and an average annual income per family of below USD 500, these people are among the most disadvantaged in the whole region facing inadequate income and employment opportunities.

In its Decent Work Country Programme, the ILO aims at promoting opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. It is estimated that decent work deficit is widespread among the poorest of the poor, including indigenous and tribal peoples. One of the major constraints, particularly for poor people, in order to initiate the creation of decent jobs, is their access to credit.

Thus, these people are supported through skills training and assistance in marketing with the aim of enabling small enterprises and cooperatives to boost self-employment among the poor. This approach has been tested and verified among indigenous communities in other countries by the ILO-INDISCO Programme and it will be adapted to local situations and used in Papua throughout the project.