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UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Sixteenth Session

Tuesday April 25, 2017

Agenda Item 8

Joint Statement of: Assembly of First Nations; Assemblée des Premières Nations du Québec et Labrador/Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador; Amnesty International; Confederacy of Treaty no. 6; First Nations Summit; Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee); BC Assembly of First Nations; Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers); Union of BC Indian Chiefs; KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives.

We come together today to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

We recommend the following:

- 1) Implementation of the *Declaration* requires both political and technical cooperation between Indigenous Peoples and States. Indigenous Peoples and States

should be encouraged to work together to co-develop National Action Plans including legislative, administrative and other frameworks for the full and effective implementation of the *Declaration*.

2) The Permanent Forum should call on States to work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, as self-determining peoples, in decision-making processes that impact our rights. The applicable international standard is free, prior, and informed consent; and States should not proceed with unilateral actions.

3) Consistent with Article 19 of the *Declaration* and Paragraph 3 of the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), we call on Canada and other States to work with Indigenous Peoples to build a solid framework to ensure future governments do not reverse any constructive advances - including legislative, administrative, and constitutional measures.

Such measures should include co-development of Indigenous languages legislation.

Implementation of the *Declaration* remains challenging. In the World Conference Outcome Document, States strongly re-committed themselves by consensus to the *Declaration* and to developing and implementing national action plans, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples. How many States today can report that such plans have been developed?

Canada's national government has made repeated, high profile commitments to implementation. Substantive actions to fulfill this promise have yet to be meaningfully realized. Concrete action is required.

We applaud the statement yesterday from Canada, formally withdrawing their objections with regard to Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

Environmental assessment laws that impact Indigenous Peoples' lands, territories, and resources need to be consistent with the *Declaration* and the WCIP Outcome Document.

Finally, it is important to mark the Declaration's 10th anniversary with another milestone by enhancing Indigenous peoples' participation in the UN, including the General Assembly.

Inclusion of Indigenous governments in the General Assembly is the next big step we must take together.

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) called on the federal and other governments to adopt the *Declaration* as "the framework for reconciliation." The TRC made 94 "Calls to Action" to address its major finding of "Truth"- that Canada's laws, policies and actions towards Indigenous peoples amounted to cultural genocide. I call it genocide.

Canada's Prime Minister recently established a Working Group of Ministers to review federal laws, policies and operational practices to ensure consistency with the *Declaration*. We want this to be a positive measure. But how the principles, work plans and objectives will be developed jointly with Indigenous Peoples is not yet clear.

Development projects continue to be approved without meeting the criteria for sustainable development and without Indigenous Peoples' free, prior, and informed consent.