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United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples 12th Session
Global Indigenous Peoples' Caucus Statement
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Agenda Item 3(b) Education
May 21, 2013

Thank you Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to address this esteemed body on the agenda item of Education. Please let me extend my sincere congratulations, on behalf of the Global Indigenous Peoples' Caucus, on your recent selection as the Chair of the UN Permanent Forum. It is an honor to address you today.

The hundreds of millions of Indigenous Peoples of the world have our own uniquely rich and dynamic learning and pedagogical methodologies that hold essential keys to the continuity of our cultures, and lifeways, and intellect. Our languages contain the consciousness of hundreds of generations of wisdom and they resonate with the vibration of the Earth. Our oral histories hold formulas for survival, especially important in this time of climate change and social chaos. Our cosmologies explain the power of the stars and our medicinal knowledge can heal when other remedies may fail. Indigenous education systems are an empowerment model, and have served Indigenous Peoples well for many millennia.

Now, settler-colonial education systems have subjected the millions of Indigenous Peoples of the world to forced assimilation. Implementing such education systems, to the exclusion of Indigenous world-views and epistemologies, is violence against our Peoples. Such strategies continue to colonize us, especially our children, imposing a servitude of perspective and intellectual capacity that chains us to an oppressive mindset and hinders our ability to fully know and engage with our own cultures, identities, and esoteric knowledge.

We uplift Articles 13, 14, and 15 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which provide minimum standards for the realization of Indigenous Peoples' rights to culturally relevant learning and pedagogical systems that are designed, implemented and led by Indigenous Peoples ourselves. We know and reaffirm that support for intercultural and intergenerational education systems and curricula are also critical in this contemporary era to build collective understanding and respect.

In this regard, we:

1. Recall and urgently reiterate that the recommendations of the Permanent Forum in 2012 (E/C.19/2012/19), specifically Paragraphs 31 and 32, as related to Indigenous education based in Indigenous languages, cultures, worldviews, be renewed and implemented either as stand alone initiatives in Indigenous Education or as a part of existing educational institutions.

2. Request that the Permanent Forum call upon states to support education systems that are pertinent and accessible and developed by Indigenous Peoples with a focus on gender equity.
3. Urge that the Forum encourage states and pertinent UN Agencies and funds of Indigenous Peoples' inherent right and full expression of self-determination, including through Indigenous education systems and our right to develop our own curricula, in our own languages, grounded in our cultural knowledge and which articulate our worldviews. This includes Indigenous Peoples' rights to define for ourselves our own educational strategies and to recognize and support our own knowledge holders as pedagogical authorities for our Peoples.
4. Reaffirm the Permanent Forum recommendation that states include in all education curricula, in particular the school system, a discussion of the Doctrine of Discovery/Dispossession and its contemporary manifestations including land loss and policies of removal. (Paragraph 9 of 11th Session)
5. Urge that the Permanent Forum work with states to ensure that Indigenous persons with disabilities, and or exceptionalities, have full access to education.
6. Urge that the Permanent Forum to encourage states to align their education systems with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to assure its full implementation, especially in consideration of our children, and the generations to come.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and to the members of the Permanent Forum, for your kind consideration of this intervention.

Elahkwa.