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**AGENDA ITEM 4 b): Human Rights Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples.**

Statement presented by Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, Native Women's Association of Canada on behalf of the Native Women's Association of Canada, the Assembly of First Nations of Canada and the International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development

(Traditional greeting)

Mr. Chairperson, Honourable Permanent Forum Members, distinguished delegates and Indigenous representatives, I am here today to speak about the human rights concern of violence against Indigenous women.

First, before specifically speaking about violence against Indigenous women, we would like to acknowledge the positive action by the government of Canada to take steps to endorse the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

Secondly, we would like to take this opportunity to add our support to the Joint Statement made under Item 3 a) Protection of Water: Water is a Human Rights presented by Tia Oros Peters from the Seventh Generation Fund.

In a 2004 Canadian government survey, Indigenous women reported rates of violence, including domestic violence and sexual assault, 3.5 times higher than non-Indigenous women. In 2008, the Homicide Survey, conducted by Statistics Canada, reported that Aboriginal women are nearly seven times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to die as the result of violence. The Native Women's Association of Canada has analyzed the staggering figures of violence experienced by Aboriginal women. In a recent report, NWAC has published information relating to 582 cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. In addition to the evidence indicating the known cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, NWAC has identified the root causes and trends related to violence, disappearance and death based on database analysis of approximately 250 variables grouped into themes relating to demographic information, life experiences, incident information, and trial and suspect information. In addition, Amnesty International's 2009 Report, *No More Stolen Sisters*, notes that police have not taken reports of missing and murdered women seriously enough, delaying investigations or making little efforts to conduct searches, or otherwise seeking public help in searching for missing Indigenous women.

We were pleased to hear the importance of this issue recognized in the Speech from the Throne last month, and welcome the commitment of ten million dollars over two years to begin addressing the issue. We have also been informed that the federal government supports the next phase of the Native Women Association of Canada's (NWAC's) Sisters in Spirit Initiative, which is recognized as critical to addressing the issue of violence against Indigenous women. We do not have information on how remaining monies would be invested but we encourage the funding be used to support comprehensive efforts to address the root causes of violence against Indigenous women.

Recognizing that Canada is moving to endorse the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, we note that, under article 21: 1) Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of Indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities in the implementation of this Declaration; and 2) States shall take measures, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, to ensure that Indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.

We emphasize the need to work in partnership with Canada, consistent with current international standards relating to Indigenous and State relations and human rights, to take concrete, coordinated action to eliminate violence against Indigenous women.

Our specific recommendations are as follows:

- 1) At the Fourth World Conference in Beijing in 1995, States were urged to look at the roots of gender-based violence and its impacts on women and society. In 1999, the General Assembly declared 25 November as the International Day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women, a day on which the world community could assess progress and commit itself to renewed efforts to end gender-based violence.
- 2) We reiterate our call for a National Action Plan would which include:
  - Addressing the root causes of violence faced by Indigenous women and girls;
  - Improving access to justice, including building an effective and unbiased police response through appropriate training;
  - Supplying adequate resources and coordination needed to reach solutions;
  - Improving public awareness and accountability through the consistent collection and publication of comprehensive national statistics on rates of violent crime against Indigenous women and
  - Providing supports to reduce the risk to Indigenous women by closing the economic and social gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada.
- 3) While the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women has gained increasing public attention in Canada, other forms of violence, including trafficking and family violence, also require immediate action. Across Canada there are less than 40 emergency shelters serving Indigenous women. There is a need for better victim services, and specific programs to assist Indigenous women who have been trafficked.
- 4) We welcome Prof. James Anaya, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples to monitor this critical human rights concern of violence against Indigenous women and girls, including missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, in accordance with his mandate.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.