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**Statement on Women as the Protectors of Water and Water Walk Promotion at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues – Tenth Session - May 17, 2011**

Aanii, Traditional Greetings from my people, the Anishinawbe Nation in Canada. I am an Anishinawbekwe and have the honour of being the President of the Native Women's Association of Canada, an officially recognized national Aboriginal women's organization in Canada.

My congratulations to the new appointees, members of the Permanent Forum, Indigenous sisters and brothers.

I am here to share with you the mandate from our women in Canada, on our role as Indigenous women and grandmothers for the protection of our waters, Mother Earth and our "Water Walks".

First Nations, Métis and Inuit people have the right to access adequate supplies of water that is safe for consumption within a healthy environment and must be fully involved in planning and operational processes with government regarding source water and watershed protection, and as we, First Nations, Métis and Inuit people share cultural and customary responsibilities to fresh water and more importantly, as women, we are the water keepers and are concerned that the water laws and agreements and systems are merging into an industry that portrays water as a commodity.

The Native Women's Association of Canada fully supports, and we will continue to maintain involvement in the planning and operational processes of source water and watershed protection at all levels of government.

Further, NWAC is mandated to support and oversees all water initiatives to ensure that the fate of Canada's source water and watershed is not one of destruction. As well, we will oversee the water policies of all levels of government to ensure that they are in compliance with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples' right to safe water for consumption and use regardless of jurisdiction.

The Native Women's Association of Canada will continue to support and heighten awareness of the current and future water walkers who carry the water for all of us by developing an Annual National Water Walk Campaign. Currently, there is a walk underway by one of our Grandmothers, Josaphine Mandamin, arriving in Ottawa, the capital of Canada on Friday of this week. She has walked with her pail of water around the Great Lakes and now, they are walking in Canada and the United States of America from the four directions. Another walk will be commencing soon in the province of Quebec.

I was asked to share this initiative, not only with the Assembly of First Nations, the Prime Minister of Canada, the Minister of Environment, all Ministers, all political parties, but especially to share this with the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples in the United Nations.

Miigwetch, Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, President