



CLIMATE CHANGE
FORUM ON
PEOPLES,
INDIGENOUS
INTERNATIONAL

International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change

APA/CMA opening statement, 7 November 2016

Thank you Chairperson,

It is appropriate that Fiji is the Presidency of this COP as it highlights the urgency for real solutions to the climate crisis. Given our direct material and spiritual relationship to our Mother Earth, Indigenous Peoples throughout the world are the first to suffer the effects of climate change. Our dependence on natural resources for our means of subsistence, our food sovereignty and ways of life are most at risk from climate variability and extremes.

For millennia we have lived in harmony with the Earth in geographical regions and ecosystems that are now most exposed to the deleterious impacts of global warming. The melting of polar ice has for decades been felt by the Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic. Entire villages have fallen into the sea. The many species of game and sea life serving as our major means of subsistence, have lost much of our habitats, and the Peoples' way of life and ice culture are fast disappearing. Melting ice caps contribute to the drastic rise in sea levels affecting our Indigenous Peoples of Small Island States in the Pacific, the Caribbean, and all the coastal regions of the world. Our mountain peoples have to contend with drought, warmer climates and the melting of their glaciers, all of which adversely affect their survival. The tropical forests of the world are in great danger from oil and mining megaprojects, industrial agriculture and monoculture plantations. These are affecting the lives and cultures of Indigenous Peoples that live in these territories.

In other ecosystems, particularly in the continent of Africa, and other regions of the world, severe cycles of droughts and floods are adversely affecting our means of subsistence and ways of life. Severe droughts are not only affecting our subsistence throughout the world, but reducing at an alarming rate the availability of Sacred Water itself. Water is life. Violent storms, hurricanes and typhoons are killing people, destroying habitat and food sovereignty, and making climate refugees of our Indigenous Peoples.

As many others throughout the world, we are concerned that the real solution to man-made climate change, the real reduction of emission of greenhouse gases is not taking place. The NDCs promised by States are less than 50% of the reductions necessary to keep global warming under 1.5 degrees Celsius. At this point, a 3 degree Celsius or higher rise in temperature is projected at the end of the century. Global warming will increase almost exponentially because of inadequate ambition in NDCs which reflect a commitment to business as usual. Exploration, infrastructure for and the production of fossil fuels are increasing. The only action to combat climate change offered by GHG polluting States is a wide range of market carbon offsets and

carbon pricing to avoid limitations on emissions. These are false solutions. The offsets themselves do not represent reductions of emissions. They are in fact emissions. They only represent payment for the privilege to pollute. We urge the States to increase their NDC ambitions and not rely on market mechanisms to save humanity and the life giving capacities of our Mother Earth.

Indigenous Peoples have witnessed an increase in frequency and severity of extreme events greater than that of our grandparents and our lived memories. These events have tested the resilience of our cultures and peoples, and proved the value and relevance of our knowledge systems. If no action is taken this invaluable knowledge will be lost to the world. This knowledge is a critical part of the solution to the climate crisis. Therefore, we need an immediate decision by the COP23 to strengthen and enhance our knowledge systems by implementing the traditional knowledge platform with all deliberate speed.

The implementation of the Paris Agreement must respect the commitments made by the Paris Accord Preamble with regard to human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and include them in the modalities for reporting the Parties' NDC. The Global Stocktake should also be a review of the integration of the cross-cutting principles and obligations of the PA including a dedicated focus on human rights, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples' rights in a transparent manner.

Omatakuiasin,

Thank you, Chairperson