

United Nation Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Tenth Session
UN Headquarters, New York, May 16 to 27, 2011
May 23, 2011

AGENDA ITEM 6: Comprehensive dialogue with United Nations agencies and funds:
Report of the annual meeting of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues

Statement Presented by Commissioner Wilton Littlechild, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC of Canada) on behalf of the North American Indigenous Peoples Caucus

Many of us will remember the remarks of UN Secretary General His Excellency Ban Ki-moon during his opening remarks for the Forum's 9th Session. In his remarks, Mr. Ban Ki-moon drew special attention to the burden of Tuberculosis (TB) among Indigenous Peoples when he stated, "In some countries, an Indigenous person is 600 times more likely to contract tuberculosis than the general population." During this year's opening remarks, last Monday, the Secretary-General again highlighted the higher rates of diseases like diabetes and tuberculosis suffered by Indigenous Peoples.

Honourable Chairperson, this is the fourth year that this Forum will hear from participants on the call for action to address the global burden of TB among Indigenous Peoples and their communities.

With the momentum gathered at the Forum's previous sessions, and given that the WHO chaired the UN Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues (IASG) for the UN Permanent Forum this year, we were particularly hopeful that the WHO would build on the call for action to address the excessive burden of diseases such as TB and HIV that Indigenous Peoples suffer globally. During our recent hearings at the TRC of Canada, we have been witnessing the current and direct link of TB and the Indian Residential Schools Legacy. Many Indian residential schools were also sanitariums for TB which remains a health risk for survivors and their descendants today.

We are gravely concerned at the lack of presence of any WHO staff person from the Central Office, and although we would like to acknowledge the presence of the Pan American Health Organization, we would like to remind participants that this organization represents only the Latin American Region. Furthermore, at the IASG meeting hosted by the WHO in Geneva this last September UNAIDS did not attend and sent no regrets.

Madame Chair, for the last three years this Forum has heard interventions calling for actions and solutions including the development of a focal point person within the Stop TB Partnership who could begin to lead this urgent initiative.

Madame Chair, I recommend the following actions and solutions:

1. That the Stop TB Partnership establishes in its Secretariat a function that focuses on Indigenous Peoples to begin the essential work of engaging Indigenous communities and National TB Programs, and
2. That regions, at next year's UNPFII session, report on their disaggregated TB rates, highlighting countries where Indigenous Peoples' access to health care is adequate and identifying Nations who require changes in their health care systems to ensure that all Indigenous Peoples enjoy the right to be free of TB and the right to health, and
3. That the WHO, UNAIDS and the Stop TB Partnership recognize the enormous role they have to play in leading and supporting initiatives that address TB and HIV affecting Indigenous Peoples and that this recognition be demonstrated through these agencies' in-person participation at the UNPFII annual meetings.

Hai Hai, Madame Chair.