

**6th SESSION OF THE UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ISSUES
- LAND, TERRITORIES AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Water is Sacred, Water is Life, Water is Fundamental:
Planning A World Indigenous Forum on Water and Peace
Requesting Support and Participation of the UNPFII**

Joint Statement by:

1. World Indigenous Water Caucus
2. The Council of Grandmothers
3. American Indian Law Alliance
4. Turaga Nation, Vanuatu
5. Council of Elders, Cross Lake Manitoba
6. Native Women's Association of Canada
7. Quebec Native Women Inc.
8. Kanaka Maoli Komike (Hawai'i)
9. Bangsa Adat Alifuru, Maluku
10. Kanak Agency for Development (New Caledonia)
11. Indigenous Environmental Network
12. International Indian Treaty Council
13. Seventh Generation Fund
14. Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, North East Zone, India.
15. Te Runanga Kaimahi Maori o Aotearoa, of NZ Council of Trade Unions (NZTU)
16. Te Hau Takitini o Aotearoa (ASTE)
17. Te Pu Raranga o Taranaki, Aotearoa
18. Nihiyaw – Cree Society (Canada)
19. Kai'opua Fyfe, The Koani Foundation
20. Aotearoa Rights Trust
21. Conscious Collaborations (Aotearoa)
22. Asia Pacific Indigenous Youth Network
23. Winnemem Wintu Tribe (California)
24. La Red Xicana Indigena
25. South Central Farmers

Agenda Item: 9 Future Directions of the Forum

Thank you, Madam Chair, Under this agenda item, future work on the permanent forum needs to address water. We have some specific recommendations. As Indigenous Peoples have repeatedly stressed, water is sacred, water is life. Water is essential for the beginning of life and needs to be respected. We are cradled by water before we are born. Water gives life to all our foods and medicines. Indigenous guardianship of the sources of water – the headwaters, the springs – is essential to protect water. We must understand and protect our relationship to the oceans. **The ocean is the sacred mat of the world, and connects us all.** Water from an Indigenous perspective is a natural element of the universe. These elements are regarded as sacred. Water has its own life force. Rivers and streams are like the arteries and veins of Mother Earth. However, governments, corporations and civil society do not understand the indigenous teachings of water. Western development is not sustainable. Indigenous customary laws are based on natural law, and

provide protection to water and life. The shifting of colonial government and corporate thinking in its relationship with water, to recognize and implement traditional laws, will result in better health and well-being for all people, all of life, and will ensure the basic human right to water. Decision-making in water policies developed by Indigenous peoples must always be informed by traditional laws and our Elders.

Therefore, we recommend that the Permanent forum

1. **We recommend that the Permanent Forum recommend the planning of a World Indigenous Forum on the Right to Peace and Water.** This will be through a partnership between the UN (UNDP, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) and IEN, together with Indigenous communities and organizations from each region, in full collaboration with Indigenous Peoples. The following agencies will also be invited: UNESCO, Institute for Water Education, World Water Assessment Program, UNICEF, UNEP and UNDP. It relates to all the mandated areas of the Permanent Forum and to the eight goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Indigenous Caucus' of the 3rd and 4th World Water Forums called for the planning and implementation of an international water forum for Indigenous peoples. In addition, Madame Chair, we would like to include the following two recommendations:
2. **We support the call for a World Conference on Indigenous Languages, and to recommend that the UNPF call on all levels of government to take responsibility and adequately fund the full restoration of Indigenous languages through language immersion for all ages.** Madame Chair, culturally appropriate environmental education, language and culture, and community education is needed that recognizes indigenous protocols, customary use of water and the fundamental sacred nature of water. Adequate government support for Indigenous language restoration for all ages is required immediately. Through maintaining our indigenous languages our generations to come will understand their relationship to the sacredness of water.

We call for the immediate adoption by the UN General Assembly of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as adopted by the UNOHCHR. Globalization, militarization, and water privatization all threaten the continuity of life.

In conclusion, Madame Chair:

**WATER IS THE MELODY AND RHYTHM OF LIFE. PROTECT WATER FOR LIFE.
WE NEED COMPASSION FOR MOTHER EARTH BY RESPECTING AND IMPLEMENTING
TRADITIONAL LAWS.**

Thank you.