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# International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development

An NGO in consultative status to the United Nations  
Economic and Social Council

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## United Nation Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Eighth Session New York, 18 May to 29 May, 2009 Item 3(a): Economic and Social Development

**Joint statement (10 delegations) presented by Dr. Wilton Littlechild, Regional Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Treaties 6, 7, and 8 (Alberta) on behalf of the Assembly of First Nations (representing 633 First Nations), International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development (IOIRD), Maskwacis Cree (Samson Cree Nation, Ermineskin Cree Nation, Louis Bull Tribe, Montana Cree Nation), Assembly of First Nation's Women's Council, Native Women's Association of Canada, and the Métis National Council**

Thank you Madame Chairperson. Greetings to your Excellencies and all delegations! Congratulations to UNPF members, Bureau and Secretariat from the Maskwacis Cree Nation. This year's session places special emphasis on implementation and a detailed review of previous recommendations. Our delegation calls attention to the UN Permanent Forum's recommendations on Economic and Social Development and in particular to UN Millennium Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8.

As the UNPF at its fourth session also stated, MDGs and economic and social development must be understood from Indigenous perspectives around the world. If Canada is truly sincere about promoting and advancing the human rights of Indigenous Peoples it must also respect this. When we speak of development, we are speaking about an inclusive, culturally-sensitive, human-rights based, gender-balanced, gender-based and sustainable approach that is based on respect for and inclusion of Indigenous peoples' world-views, perspectives, experiences and concepts of development.

As stated in past interventions to the UNPFII, Indigenous economies have been adversely affected by a diverse set of factors which limit growth and development. Our economies are vital to the health and well-being of our governments, communities and citizens. The strength of our traditional economies is directly and positively impacted by sustainable development principles. Economic balance is not separate from environmental and community well being in our understanding of development.

Currently, many Indigenous peoples lack access to necessary economic resources to properly develop their economies. This is often integrally tied to the need for control over traditional territories, lands and resources. With the lack of community-controlled economic program infrastructures, many Indigenous Peoples are unable to advance community-driven development

priorities. Physical infrastructures, such as access to modern technology are required to support our economies, tele-health systems, water monitoring, and long-distance learning capacities. Indigenous Peoples are prepared to help respond to Canadian labor shortages however our delivery structures will require appropriate support to train and prepare human resources of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous women also require long-term education, training and labour-market strategies which will allow Indigenous women to be competitive in the labour market. This includes increased access to credit and financial institutions to be able to develop and advance economic development goals.

In accordance with articles 23 and 32 of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and preambular paragraphs 5 and 9 we have two recommendations.

1. We urge the UN Permanent Forum to call on Canada in addition to their intervention presented yesterday to implement the following:
  - a) **Indigenous Peoples in Canada require legislative, fiscal and political support and cooperation from Canada that will respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples to economic development and which will respond to local, regional, national and international development priorities.**
  - b) **As part of the development agenda, we are advancing an Inter-Nation Trade module between Indigenous peoples and in which we would extend participation with all levels of Canadian government.**
  - c) **Indigenous Peoples in Canada require connectivity (communications technology and information management) as a basis to support economic growth opportunities among developing, emerging and dynamic economies. This module will also ensure the full and effective participation of Indigenous women.**
  - d) **We emphasize to the Canadian government the importance of building on existing delivery infrastructure to increase the skills, training and employment opportunities for Indigenous citizens, including targeted and long-term strategies for Indigenous women and youth.**
  - e) **We call on all levels of the Canadian government to respect the constitutional duty to consult and accommodate and to respect the right of free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples as reflected in the *UN Declaration*, including articles 18 and 19.**
  - f) **Culturally relevant gender-balanced, gender-based analyses and gender budgeting are critical for economic development policy and initiatives in Canada.**
  - g) **We call on Canada to consult with Indigenous Peoples in Canada in a manner that fully respects the Crown's treaty and constitutional obligations and fully responds to the goals, needs and rights of Indigenous Peoples in the development and design of their new Aboriginal Economic Framework. The new framework must consider the needs of our economic growth requirements regardless of whether our economies are at a development, emerging, or a dynamic phase. This includes ensuring that all Indigenous Peoples can access support systems leading to participation and benefit in the wealth and prosperity of Canada. This is also consistent with articles 21, 23 and 32 of the *UN Declaration*.**

We also refer the UNPF to our previous intervention on the *UN Declaration* and Treaties, noting for example, Treaty No. 6 is an economic framework for development. I also acknowledge that on March 9-11, 2009, the AFN hosted an Inter-Nation Trade and Economic Summit in Toronto, Canada. The summit brought together First Nations and Indigenous leaders and business

communities, key players in corporate Canada, international stakeholders, federal and provincial ministers, and economic development experts.

The Inter-Nation Trade and Economic Summit is part of an AFN broader economic strategy. As part of my portfolio we worked to advance elements of this strategy, namely the AFN Economic Blue Print. A key component of this strategy is to build new relationships that will respect our roles in the economy. As such, the AFN Corporate Challenge Initiative aims to purposely communicate with the private sector. On an immediate needs level and in an effort to help break poverty cycles, this initiative was also created to help promote opportunities that generate partnership, investment, procurement, and employment opportunities from which First Nations may benefit; in addition to reinforcing every stakeholder's duty to environmental and developmental best practices that respect the full human rights of First Nations in Canada.

**In conclusion, we support the UNPF recommendation as stated in paragraph 56 of the document E/C.19/2009/7 calling for reducing the number of recommendations issued during your annual sessions. We also take note and endorse the international expert group meeting report (CRP.8) you just presented Madame Chair yesterday. We also add our voice to the North America Caucus Preparatory Meeting (CRP 4) and the Global Caucus Statements and Recommendations. Finally, our delegations support the joint statement on diabetes that will be presented.**

**Thank you. We have submitted our full written text for your consideration.**

*W. Littlechild IPC*

Dr. Wilton Littlechild, IPC  
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