

United Nations

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## Economic and Social Council

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### Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Fifth Session

New York, 15-26 May 2006

Item 4g of the Agenda

Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples

JOINT STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF:

Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (ALRM)

Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA)

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC)

Menzies School of Health Research

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (NACCHO)

National Network of Indigenous Women's Legal Services (NNIWS)

New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC)

World Council of Churches (WCC)

### Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples

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*Madam Chairperson*

Our organisations have already recommended to the Permanent Forum members that they ask States and Indigenous Peoples to report to next year's session on the progress in implementing Paragraphs 91 to 99 of the Program of Action for the Second Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

The General Assembly has unanimously supported the adoption of the Second Decade and then, in a separate vote one year later, unanimously approved the Program of Action for the Second Decade.

(We are not sure if 'unanimous' or 'by consensus' is the correct terminology.)

Therefore all States with Indigenous Peoples as part of their population have no excuse to not act in accordance with the two decisions of the General Assembly.

The Plan of Action proposes that 'tripartite' country coordination teams be established with representation from UN agencies, the government and the Indigenous Peoples, to co-ordinate Plans of Action.

We remind the Indigenous Peoples' delegations that the implementation of the Program of Action also specifies in Paragraphs 91 to 99 that Indigenous Peoples should proactively plan activities.

The Plan of Action identifies that regional coordination should occur, also under tripartite arrangements between UN agencies, States and Indigenous Peoples.

We are already discussing how to pursue this proposal in the Pacific region.

*Madam Chairperson,*

Intergovernmental organisations are also asked to contribute and participate in the activities for the Second Decade.

The Co-ordinator of the Commonwealth Association of Indigenous Peoples (CAIP) recently met with the Commonwealth Secretariat and asked if that intergovernmental body was developing its Plan of Action for the Second Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

The response so far, from the Commonwealth, is to this effect:

'What are Indigenous Peoples? There are no Indigenous Peoples in the Commonwealth! We have no responsibilities to Indigenous Peoples in the Commonwealth! The human rights of Indigenous Peoples are not a Commonwealth concern.'

It is to a great disadvantage to all the Indigenous Peoples of the world colonised by the United Kingdom that the Commonwealth 'sees no Indigenous Peoples, hears no Indigenous Peoples and speaks of no Indigenous Peoples'.

Also disadvantaged are those small States with Indigenous populations who participate in Commonwealth development programs, partake in trade arrangements within the Commonwealth or rely upon aid from Commonwealth countries.

*Madam Chairperson,*

We would like to thank those many States who have contributed and continue to contribute positively to the work of the Permanent Forum – States such as Mexico, Norway, Canada, Fiji, Denmark, Guatemala.

Their reports on the developments in their countries, especially in regard to the exercise of free, prior and informed consent and partnership arrangements help many of us Indigenous Peoples to believe in the reality of universal human rights, democracy and good governance.

We have asked the Government of Australia of its intentions to develop and implement a Plan of Action for the Second Decade, and we see no evidence that a plan is to be formulated.

We have seen that Australia, along with New Zealand and the USA, do not support Indigenous self-determination nor our right to free, prior and informed consent over those matters affecting our lives and futures - another way of saying 'of the people, by the people and for the people' - but will we see Australia's contribution to the Second Decade in the form of a Plan of Action?

We are sure that all participants here, UN agencies, States and Indigenous Peoples alike, will be most interested in whether these three States – Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America – are able to respond positively to this most important and needed initiative already twice endorsed by the United Nations.

Remember that the objectives of the Second Decade are to:

- Promote non-discrimination and inclusion;
- Promote Indigenous Peoples' participation in decisions;
- Redefine development policies, to promote cultural diversity;
- Adopt targeted programs; and
- Develop strong monitoring mechanisms

We are reminded that these States in their two joint statements to this Permanent Forum session said that they:

*'strongly support support the full and active participation of Indigenous Peoples in democratic decision-making' and*

*'support efforts to increase Indigenous Peoples' participation in decisions that affect them.'*

We ask from the floor that these States in particular provide information to the next session on their actions in regard to Paragraphs 91 to 99 of the Program of Action, thus demonstrating to other States their reputable commitment to non-discrimination against Indigenous Peoples and to the objectives of the United Nations.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **That the Permanent Forum:**

- 1. invite reports, regarding the implementation of Paragraphs 91 to 99 of the Second Decade Program of Action, from all parties be submitted to the next session of the Permanent Forum,**
- 2. request the Co-ordinator of the Second Decade:**
  - a. write to States to present this request and seek the cooperation from the States;**
  - b. write to relevant Inter-Governmental organisations, particularly the Commonwealth, to present this request and seek cooperation;**
  - c. prepare a report on the regional engagements to implement Paragraphs 91 to 99 of the Program of Action.**