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**Statement by International Chief Wilton Littlechild, Expert Member (WEOG Region)**

**9<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> July 2016)**

**Agenda Item: 4 Panel Discussion on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Persons with Disabilities**

**July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

Good morning to all delegations.

I would like to congratulate both the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Vicky Tauli-Corpuz, and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar for Co-Chairing last week's Expert Group Meeting on the Rights of Indigenous Persons with Disabilities and to the International Labour Organization for hosting this Group Meeting.

I was honoured to participate in this event to share the work of the Expert Mechanism in the area of promoting the human rights of Indigenous persons with disabilities. During my participation, I was struck by the significant contribution of Indigenous persons with disabilities in this area – I was inspired by how well the representatives of the Indigenous persons with disabilities articulated not only the barriers, but the solutions to these barriers.

I recall the first time that at the Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network formally participated at the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at the 14<sup>th</sup> session. I recall welcoming the members of the Caucus, on behalf of the Expert Mechanism, discussing how we can ensure that we hear the perspectives of Indigenous persons with disabilities within the UN system. Today, I can see that we have made some progress in this regard. For example, the Global Indigenous Peoples Caucus this past weekend was historic because it is the first time that an Indigenous person with a disability was selected as a Co-Chair, Ms. Olga Montufar.

However, we are far from being able to congratulate ourselves for meeting this challenge. In this regard, I would like to outline some of the proposed solutions for advancing the rights of Indigenous peoples with disabilities. First, I would like to recommend that consideration be given by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities consider issuing a General Comment on the Rights of Indigenous Persons with Disabilities, utilizing the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as a framework to interpreting the application of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, in partnership with Indigenous persons with disabilities. Second, the sessions of the Expert Mechanism should be held in a fully accessible manner. I understand that there are financial constraints that impede realization of this solution. So, today, I issue a challenge to each representative in this room to seek out additional support to enable the Expert Mechanism to be a leader in this area. This will advance the equality rights of Indigenous persons with disabilities. Third, I would suggest that the Expert Mechanism consider making “the rights of Indigenous persons with disabilities” a

standing agenda item on the Expert Mechanism's annual sessions to ensure that this issue receives adequate consideration.

On a personal note, I would like to thank the representative from the WEOG region, and indeed, from Canada, Doreen Demas for her leadership in this area. More generally, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Eric Fleming for his excellent assistance in my work over the past 6 years. I was planning to save my thank you's for the end of the week, but I know that Eric is leaving tomorrow, so I thank you for allowing me to take the time to do this now.

Hai Hai. (Thank you.)