

Global Indigenous Youth Caucus

16th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

24 April 2017 to 5 May 2017

Agenda Item 4: “Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”

Thank you Madame Chair. On behalf of the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, we congratulate you on the appointment as the Chair of this sixteenth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Esteemed Members of the Forum; distinguished representatives of Indigenous Peoples; Member States; Elders Past, Present and Emerging; brothers and sisters.

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Throughout history, upon contact with Indigenous People, colonial states have directly and significantly impacted our culture and ways of being. We aspire to be the generation who will break the cycle. We as Indigenous Youth are safe to build a strong Cultural Identity for Indigenous Peoples of all ages and across all geographical areas of the globe. We are the vehicles of change for our people, who have been gifted from our ancestors and Elders with the many years of hard work already done for rights of our people. We now have the global consensus of what those rights are in the form of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), we now know that our culture is valuable and we will continue to pass this immense strength onto generations to come, and share the diversity with non-Indigenous brothers and sisters. Cultural pride, traditional practices and knowledges, the survival of Indigenous languages, and the vision for a strong future, have been gifts instilled in many Indigenous youth.

Looking around the room, we are surrounded by role model Indigenous youth who have been given this gift of pride and resilience, and have survived silent trauma and oppression, both directly and indirectly. We are the lucky ones. There are many people who have grown up in the same situations and communities that we have, who were not as lucky. Many Indigenous youth face identity crisis. As a result of this identity crisis we are losing many Indigenous peoples to alcohol and drug abuse, illnesses both mentally and physically, violent acts of rage, and suicide.

Being connected to our language and culture through in all levels of a being (Mind, body, soul) builds our foundational values and gives youth the opportunity to flourish in the modern world today. We must walk between two worlds, the modern and the traditional. We are advocates for our ancestors and advocates for generations who are unborn. We will work to instil this pride for generations to come. Allowing indigenous youth to connect with culture and language at the grassroots, fostering and supporting the enhancement will bring

the wellbeing that our people are starving for. In light of these comments, the GIYC make the following comments and recommendations in line with many of the mandate areas of the UNPFII.

Human Rights

The GIYC is committed to ensure that the collective voice of the Indigenous Youth from the seven socio-cultural regions is heard. This collective voice ensures that the concerns of the Indigenous Youth are addressed and promoted at all levels.

Indigenous Youth are the future of the Indigenous Peoples, and are the direct inheritors of the collective Rights of our Peoples, including the right of self-determination, the right to culture, traditional lands and territories, and in particular the rights that protect the profound relationship between Indigenous people and their territories, which are all in accordance with the UNDRIP.

Extractive agencies are gaining access to Indigenous Lands, Waters, and Territories through state represented organizations and corporate bodies, undermining the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, who we maintain to have, and have had, the right and jurisdiction to control Indigenous Lands, Territories, Waters, and resources.

The GIYC recalls Articles 38, 41 and 42 of the Declaration, wherein the right of indigenous peoples to free, prior and informed consent, is addressed, recognized and affirmed in the UNDRIP.

The GIYC questions the implementation of these articles, and submit the following recommendations:

1. In accordance with UNDRIP Article 41, the GIYC calls upon the Permanent Forum, and urges the member-states and UN Agencies to review their processes to include the full, equal and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, in particular Indigenous Youths, in decisions affecting self-determination, Indigenous Communities, Lands, and Territories, economic, social and cultural rights, and any other matters wherein Indigenous Peoples and Future generations of the Indigenous Peoples are concerned.
2. The GIYC, reaffirms the recommendation from paragraph 41 of the Permanent Forums 12th session, which acknowledges that states shall establish a monitoring mechanism to address violence against Indigenous Peoples, including assassinations, assassination attempts, rapes, and other intimidation tactics against Indigenous Peoples who are safeguarding their Lands, Waters, and territories, with specific attention to actions perpetrated by State and local Police, military, law enforcement institutions, the judiciary, and other State-controlled institutions.
3. Extractive industrial development is destroying Indigenous Peoples' Lands, Livelihoods, Resources, Territories, Waters, as well as the environmental as a whole.

The GIYC supports the recommendation from the Permanent Forum's 7th session, paragraph 39, which states that the World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral institutions implement alternative systems beyond the perpetuation of highly centralized fossil fuel-based energy supplies. The GIYC also support paragraph 51 from the Forum's 12th Session, which recommends that all Governments and the bodies established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ensure respect for and recognition of the UNDRIP, in particular in the context of Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

4. GIYC, in reference to paragraph 25 of the recommendation made during the 12th Session, urges UNESCO, UNICEF, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and WIPO to work closely with Indigenous Peoples to develop an instrument to protect and nurture Traditional Knowledge and Culture-based Economic Opportunities and Activities as a potential vehicle to empower Indigenous People's identities'.
5. The GIYC, refer to Article 22 of UNDRIP and call upon the Permanent Forum to address to the Member States the need to establish a monitoring mechanism to address the issue of missing and murdered indigenous Women, and to take measures to ensure the full protection of Indigenous Women against all forms of violence.
6. The GIYC further calls upon the implementation of paragraph 47 of the 12th session of the Permanent Forum, which recommends that UNICEF, Member States and indigenous peoples translate this publication into all languages, in particular indigenous languages. Furthermore, that Member States, indigenous peoples and others use this publication in the curricula of studies of indigenous and non-indigenous youth.

Education

The Global Indigenous Youth Caucus is committed to ensuring our collective voice is uplifted. This collective voice ensures that our Indigenous brothers and sisters voices are addressed in a manner that does not put their lives or their families' lives in danger.

Indigenous youth have a sacred connection to the knowledge of our land and ancestors, to our waters and to our territories, and through this, we have a responsibility to maintain that connection with integrity. We maintain that connection to knowledge through traditional knowledge systems and contemporary forms of education. In reference to Article 14(1) of the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples. We maintain the right to establish and control educational systems that is delivered through our own languages in a manner appropriate to cultural methods of teaching and learning.

The Global Indigenous Youth Caucus recalls recommendation 9 from the Fifteen Session of the Permanent Forum. Though we recognize the establishment of language implementation policies, this is not reflective in educational institutions both within Indigenous Education or in public education systems. This discrepancy fails to enhance pedagogical practices through

traditional ways of knowing and facilitates the low achievement rates amongst Indigenous students. We know Indigenous students deserve an equitable education that is implemented in a meaningful way so that all students can reach their potential without having to sacrifice the language of their people.

Indigenous peoples have the right to be understood in political, legal and administrative proceedings in accordance with Article 13 of the UNDRIP and instructed through the appropriate cultural methods of teaching and learning which is most equitable for many nations in their traditional language. Furthermore, to ensure equitable educational opportunities for all students, equitable funding models need to be implemented to facilitate this process. Many students face deficits due to the lack of resources such as guidance counsellors, inconsistent teachers, and administrative bodies who do not understand the culture. These systems of oppression, as long as they are active, will continue to facilitate the same results.

Therefore, we call into question and reject any policies, procedures and processes within the UN System that undermine or limit these rights.

1. Based on these rights, we submit the following recommendations, that: In accordance with the UNDRIP's Article 13.2, we call upon the Permanent Forum to urge Member States to review their processes of Federally funded education so schools in Indigenous communities can gain access to the same or equitable amenities as public education schools of the same region.
2. Recalling the Recommendation of the Third Session of the Permanent Forum, paragraph 19, which calls for the adoption and full implementation of comprehensive national Indigenous education policies. We recommend Permanent Forum urge the Member States to re-evaluate their response to include the implementation of traditional language, traditional ways of knowing and equitable funding models for Federally funded educational institutions.
3. Echoing the recommendations from the Fifteenth Session of the Permanent Forum, paragraph 9, we call upon the Member States to develop evidence-based policies and legislation to promote and protect Indigenous languages that includes statistics of language revitalization which should inform educational curriculum.
4. In reference to the Eighth's Session of the Permanent Forum, Paragraph 8, we call upon the Permanent Forum to guide Member States to the creation and implementation of cultural studies centres in Universities and encourage Universities to provide permanent teaching positions to Indigenous peoples in all colleges of the campus, and for the study centres; and to establish designated scholarships exclusively for Indigenous students.

Environment

The GIYC acknowledge the important and spiritual connection that Indigenous Peoples have with land and waters. Having regard to the right of Indigenous Peoples to have their ancestral territories recognised, there is also the cultural laws and customs in which Indigenous Peoples have responsibilities for the protections and preservation of land and waters. Environmental issues is thus fundamentally within the auspice of Indigenous Rights recognition.

1. The GIYC highlights the imperative that extractive industries must comply with the principle of free, prior and informed consent, and Member States should also be ensuring that domestic legislation is reflective of this inherent right. Development should not be at the sacrifice of fundamental human rights in respect of some of our most vulnerable peoples.
2. The GIYC reminds State Parties engaged in extractive and resource industries to be actively adhering to the rights enumerated in the UNDRIP, and in particular we Indigenous youth are concerned for the **Aquacide** that is occurring on traditional lands and territories—the killing of the waters by dams, privatization, extractive industrial and mega-agricultural developments, hydraulic fracturing, toxics and pollution, and other ways inhibit Water's ability to create and support life. We must halt the killing of our waters by all forms of extractive industrial development that impede the life giving nature of Water. We hope to advance this through UN Water, UNDRIP and other relevant UN agencies and mechanisms.
3. The GIYC support the development of relevant UN Agencies to conduct a world expert study on the influence of transnational corporations on member states' policies regarding Indigenous Peoples' land water and natural resources in our traditional territories, which go beyond the confines of member state imposed artificial borders. This study shall include full and meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples and explore this issue specifically as it relates to current infrastructure projects occurring across the globe. Such as recent examples of the Dakota Access and Keystone XL Pipelines which have proven the abhorrent disregard for Indigenous free, prior and informed consent and the rights in the UNDRIP, namely, Articles 3, 4, 25, and 32.
4. The GIYC supports relevant UN Agencies and Programmes, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, in the initiation of a close review and assessment of Water regulation and policies that affect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, how it affects our health, the health of ecosystems, and our future generations. This high level meeting should establish indicators for the health of water for Indigenous Nations, which suffer disproportionately from Aquacide in our territories. This is urgent due to the increasing negative impacts on water due to global climate change. (Recalling recommendation 78 of UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Session 7, 2008).

Climate change is a foremost threat to our land, water, and continuation of our way of life. As Indigenous youth, we will bear the heaviest burden of the changes that are currently taking place because of member states inaction in halting the effects of transnational corporations continuous attacks on our land, water and natural resources.

Health

We indigenous youth representing the seven socio-cultural regions recognized by United Nations have some concerns about the health and wellbeing of indigenous youth.

Indigenous Peoples, in all our broad diversity, must have the full enjoyment of our right to a healthy life without discrimination or threat. These threats and harms include the historical and current appropriation, desecration, contamination and destruction of our bodies, resources, lands and territories gravely impacting health, wellness, traditional medicines and sacred spaces throughout all regions of the world.

This year the declaration is making ten years since the adoption and we would like to give special thanks for the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) that showed interesting in work with the specific agenda of indigenous youth, as was showed in Rome and Brasilia of this year respectively.

An important issue to include, which was not mentioned in report of the 15th session, is the issue of environmental violence, which constitutes a threat to our cultural, physical, spiritual, mental health, and in particular Indigenous children's health. One tragic example can be found in Rio Yaqui, Sonora, Mexico, where the Yaqui children are exposed to environmental pollutants and toxic pesticides, leading to increasing numbers of child cancers, birth defects, and devastating impacts on health. Many pesticides being used are banned in first world countries due to their harmful effects, yet are still exported to developing countries such as Mexico for use. In 2015, the Committee on the Rights of a Child called on Mexico to “Prohibit the import and use of any pesticides or chemicals that have been banned or restricted for use in exporting countries”. We call on the CRC to expand this recommendation to include other importing countries where indigenous mothers and children are similarly affected. We also strongly support the CRC’s recognition of environmental health as a right protected under the convention on the rights of a child and strongly appreciate it’s continued focus on this as a global issue and an issue important to the mandated area of health.

Furthermore, the intersections between gender inequality, lack of education, sexual and reproductive health, STIs and HIV/AIDS are of great significance. For example, in Honduras as well as Kenya, multitudes of Indigenous girls are subjected to harmful practices. They are getting married as young as 13, without being allowed to choose to whom, or when. Moreover, they are forced to maintain sexual relations with their husbands against their will. This results in higher levels of birth defects, infant mortality, and maternal mortality.

We like to thank the effort made to include the participation of the special correspondent on youth suicide to brought this topic during the 15th session of the forum, in reference in article 34 of the report of the 15th session of the forum to reducing Indigenous youth suicide and promoting mental health, however it still a gap in studies and database about this issue in many regions.

Further recommendations on this area:

5. En ese sentido, recomendamos poner en marcha el Plan Regional de Salud en coordinación con las oficinas de país, las instancias nacionales en salud, en consulta con los pueblos y jóvenes indígenas.
6. Para lograr la igualdad entre los géneros y empoderar a todas las mujeres, jóvenes y niñas indígenas en base al objetivo 5 de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible, es necesario poner fin a todas las formas de discriminación y violencias, garantizar el acceso universal a la salud, salud sexual y reproductiva y los derechos reproductivos, así como emprender reformas que otorguen a las jóvenes indígenas el derecho a los recursos económicos en condiciones de igualdad.
7. Recomendamos a los estado facilitar a los jóvenes indígenas que han sido objeto de violencia el acceso a refugios, asistencia médica, psicológica y de otra índole, así como a asistencia jurídica y servicios de emergencia. Garantizando el derecho a investigaciones efectivas, esclarecimiento de los casos y acceso a la justicia, así como el goce de una atención y reparación integral según los estándares más altos de derechos humanos.
8. We call on the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to urge Member States to implement recommendations 62-64 of the EGM report on sexual and reproductive health, and we emphasize the connection of our health to the wellness of our lands, territories and resources.
9. We remind Member States that Indigenous Peoples have the right to access traditional healing, which provides for culturally specific treatments when it comes to a mental health.

Economic and Social

Economic empowerment for Indigenous youth should be enhanced. States and communities should be encouraged to invest in youth initiatives relating to indigenous social innovations, social enterprises and start-ups, for instance through providing training for development of sustainable entrepreneurship. Inspiring youths through compelling projects would raise awareness and interest, but also contribute to the transfer of traditional agricultural knowledge, for instance through youth initiatives relating to indigenous agriculture, conservation & tourism.

1. The GIYC notes the importance of developing economic growth in indigenous territories: all plans for economic development by states should prioritize long term economic development for the indigenous communities, and importantly, collect data on results of economic development. Economic development plans at all levels should follow the guidelines for FPIC.
2. The GIYC highlights the right to self-determination should be the basis of all economic growth in indigenous territories: where member States have plans for economic

development, and consists partially or entirely of Indigenous territories, Indigenous Peoples should by way of practice, be consulted throughout the entire process; this inherent right is imbedded within the principles of the UNDRIP.

3. Sustainable development should be promoted amongst Indigenous youth through education and training programmes, with a focus of skills-building and capacity building initiatives. The important aspect is the longevity and sustainability of Indigenous participation as we move forward with future generations.
4. The GIYC recommends the development of indicators and pre-emptive measures to tackle social problems, which particularly considers the position of Indigenous youth; and measures should be taken to ensure effective youth participation in planning processes for social development mechanisms.

We thank you for your consideration in all these matters.

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