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Statement by

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Ambassador and Permanent Representative

of the

Commonwealth of Dominica

to

The Second Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on

Indigenous Issues

on

Agenda Item: Future Work of the Permanent Forum

Thursday, May 22, 2003
United Nations Headquarters
New York

Mr. Chairperson:

The Commonwealth of Dominica is very pleased with the emerging reality of strong and growing interest on the part of the Indigenous Peoples in international forums and we congratulate the Permanent Forum for their important work in this regard. We have been informed that the registration has nearly doubled for this Second Session over that of the previous year.

Clearly, Indigenous peoples are not only interested in participating in the UN system but are also anxious to provide us all with their unique perspective. The contribution that Indigenous peoples have made to the international standard setting process has become a role model in this area. The full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples at all levels of the United Nations is essential in order to encourage and enhance this important development in international relations between peoples.

With these few introductory remarks, the Commonwealth of Dominica delegation makes the following recommendations to the Permanent Forum with regards to its future work:

1. It is clear from the interventions that we have heard from experts, nation states, and NGOs that many of the aspirations of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples have not been met. Accordingly, we call upon the Permanent Forum to recommend establishment of a second decade in order to accomplish all of the goals set forth by the General Assembly.

2. The expert studies by the special rapporteurs appointed by the Commission on Human Rights should be utilized to guide the Forum in its own recommendations and resolutions, especially with regards to land and treaty rights. In order to utilize these studies in its future work, it is incumbent upon the Permanent Forum to ask that the Study on Treaties by Professor Miguel Alfonso Martinez, the Study on Cultural Heritage and the Study on Land by Professor Erica-Irene A. Daes be approved by ECOSOC.

3. We strongly support the Forum's decision to convene a seminar on treaties as a first step and we encourage the organization of this seminar as soon as possible. On the basis of the outcomes of this seminar, a decision should be made regarding the viability of a world conference on treaties.

4. We recommend that the Permanent Forum establish and maintain a repository of all treaties that have been entered into between states or their predecessors, successors, or agents, and Indigenous peoples or between Indigenous peoples themselves. Such a repository will contribute to the peace, friendship, and indigenous-state relations and could form a significant part of meeting the mandates of the Permanent Forum, ECOSOC, and the United Nations Charter.

5. We recommend that the Permanent Forum and its secretariat be provided with sufficient funding in order to completely fulfill its mandate. This should include the necessary funding so that individual members of the Permanent Forum may obtain a wide range of relevant information relating to human rights and other issues within their mandate, especially by visiting the territories of Indigenous nations and communities.

6. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, we would recommend that every effort be undertaken to see to the passage of the Draft Declaration on the Rights of the World's Indigenous Peoples by the end of the current decade. We echo the sentiments of Professor Erica-Irene Daes in her expression that this is critical to the rights of Indigenous peoples within the international community. In this respect, we call for the preservation of its critical components.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.