

**Global Indigenous Youth Caucus Intervention to the 3rd Session of the Expert
Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

**Agenda Item 5: Proposals to be submitted to the Human Rights Council for its
consideration and approval**

15 July 2010

Mr. Chair, our fellow indigenous brothers and sisters, uncles and aunties, the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus is very appreciative of the opportunity to speak here at the 3rd session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We are hopeful of the impact that has been made here but we also understand there is still much left to do.

It is apparent that youth voices are largely absent from decision-making processes, especially on international level, despite the UN system and other international organizations providing platforms for dialogues and capacity building. Challenges facing youth in participation and decision-making are rarely isolated, rather, they affect and overlap one another.

With this in mind, we put forth the following six recommendations to enhance the role of indigenous youth in decision-making:

1. We call upon the Expert Mechanism to conduct a report to analyze the degree of indigenous youth participation at the UN system, such as the UNPFII, EMRIP, and relevant programs and workshops. It is imperative that indigenous youths have exposure to decision-making processes and social mechanisms in order to encourage advocacy work at local, national, and international levels. To help realize this goal, we call for the creation of UN Indigenous Fellowship programs in all branches of the United Nations Specialized Agencies, Programs, and Funds.

2. We request a study on the determinants of health of indigenous peoples, especially that of indigenous youth, to be conducted. Indigenous youths worldwide are among the greatest at risk to suffer from substance abuse problems, high rates of suicide, nutrition

related ailments, and many other conditions that limit their capacity to effectively participate in decision-making processes. Thus it is important to identify the major determinants of health affecting indigenous youths and find a means of response that is effective, holistic, preventative, and sustainable.

3. Cultural traditions, ancestral heritage, and indigenous languages are important in the preservation of identity. Indigenous youth who have maintained these practices and who undertake leadership roles in society face unique obstacles and circumstances. To empower future generations, we request an evaluation and study of the successes and challenges facing indigenous youths in leadership positions in various aspects of society ranging from post-secondary institutions to professional positions.

4. Climate change and its impact on indigenous homelands threaten the livelihood of indigenous peoples worldwide. Youth who reside in areas at risk face the possibility of losing their lands, the connection to their cultural roots, and being forced into cities where their traditions are not promoted. Thus they face the risk of being severed from their indigenous identity. We ask that the Expert Mechanism carry out a series of workshops to analyze the impacts of climate change on indigenous culture and identity in all 7 regions of the indigenous world over a multi-year period.

5. Many factors affecting indigenous peoples' livelihoods are crosscutting, for example education, health, cultural survival, and participation in decision-making. Therefore, we request a roundtable discussion among special rapporteurs from different mandate areas to look at these collective impacts on indigenous communities with a focus on youth in particular.

6. We request a follow-up not only on this session but the previous session on education as well. Education is intrinsically tied to capacity building, thus it is essential we ensure that the measures implemented are sustainable and effective. We also request the Expert Mechanism keep in mind that there a distinction exists between participation and decision-making. Participation itself does not guarantee indigenous peoples' voices are

being taken into consideration.

In conclusion, we feel these recommendations will facilitate the role of indigenous youth in decision-making and we hope to see EMRIP include the place of youth in future studies.

Thank you.