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PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONSULTATIONS

Intervention Delivered by Cathryn Eatock on Behalf of the Indigenous Peoples Organisation of Australia

Thank you, Mr/Madam Chair and President of the General Assembly Advisors, for your work to date and for hosting these important consultations.

My name is Cathryn Eatock, I'm a Kairi and Budtjula woman from Australia, and Chair of the Indigenous Peoples Organisation, which represents 250 organisations and individual members, from Nations from across Australia.

First, let me thank you for the opportunity to contribute to these significant consultations considering ways the over 400 million Indigenous peoples globally may participate in the General Assembly.

In reference to the Zero Draft I would like to confirm our support for a new distinct category for Indigenous participation in the General Assembly. I would like to emphasise that participation should apply to its main committees, but particularly the Second and Third Committees that address issues, to enable Indigenous peoples to contribute to issues considered that directly impact on us.

In respect of venues of participation, I support Op paragraph 6 Alternative 1, but suggest adding 'and other additional meetings on issues that affect them'.

In regard to Selection Mechanisms

In Op Paragraph 14, I support Alternative 3, as it includes 7 State appointed representative and 7 Indigenous regional representatives, to be appointed to a dedicated Selection Committee.

I would like to note, however that I don't support the extended role of the Permanent Forum to decision making on who may represent regions on the Selection Committee. The Permanent Forum already has an onerous mandate and workload so I would recommend its removal from all instances it is referenced within the Zero Draft. Indigenous peoples from their regions should determine who is their representative on the Selection Committee through developed protocols.

With respect to Op 19, decision making of the Selection Committee should be by a simple majority of the Selection Committee.

In relation to Op 20, I note that the Pacific region faces distinct and regionally specific issues. So, we strongly agree with the Selection Committee being guided by the need for regional, geographical representation. We propose that regional representation to attend meetings be selected on basis of relevance and expertise of issues covered. Each region is impacted by the issues being considered by the General Assembly so all regions require an equal voice for matters under consideration by the General Assembly.

With regard to Op 31, it is the IPO view, that the selection Committee requires its own dedicated Secretariat staff for the Selection Committee rather than the use of the Permanent Forum Secretariat, which has an existing heavy work load.

We also support the inclusion of appeal processes.

In respect to the Selection Criteria and Op 35 and Op 36, we agree with recognition that Indigenous peoples vary greatly from region to region and nation to nation and that this historical diversity should be taken into account and that factors determining Indigenous people representative institutions should be flexibly interpreted.

With regard to Op 37, we support the inclusion of recognition by other Indigenous peoples as a criteria.

We agree with the flexible interpretation of these definitional factors but suggest adding the wording, 'prior to colonization', after occupation of ancestral lands.

Indigenous peoples impacted more harshly by previous colonization processes should not be penalised for their historical experiences and loss as a result of colonization.

While many Aboriginal communities have been dispossessed through the devastating impact of colonization, our identity and cultural distinctiveness as Indigenous peoples remains strong.

Indigenous peoples have a great deal to contribute in resolving the many challenges the world faces, so thank you for enabling the IPO to contribute to these significant deliberations. We will forward our comments in writing.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to these deliberations.