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UPDATED COLLECTIVE STATEMENT
Agenda Item 7: Special discussion on Indigenous languages
April 24, 2008

Intervention to the Seventh Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2008
Respectfully submitted by Tatanka Oyate (Buffalo Nations), and cosignatories: Seventh
Generation Fund and Idiwanan An Chawe (Zuni)

Madame Chairperson, distinguished members of the Permanent Forum and honorable delegates; the youth and elders, and colleagues, I am Rosalie Little Thunder, of the Sicangu Band of the Lakota Nation.

We encourage the Permanent Forum to continue its attention on the urgent need to protect the languages of Indigenous peoples. Too many Indigenous languages have already become extinct and many more will become extinct very soon. We concur with the conclusions and recommendations stated in your 2008 *Report on Indigenous Languages*. The protection of Indigenous languages is not only a cultural and moral imperative for our own benefit. Indigenous cultures have evolved around the need to interact with Mother Earth in a respectful, long-term relationship, so it is also a matter of human survival. Indigenous languages hold the critical instructions to address the loss of biodiversity and climate change, as well as other environmental challenges caused and faced by all of humanity.

As 2008 has been declared the Year of Indigenous Languages, we present the following substantive recommendations to UNPFII:

To move for the establishment of regional hearings for Indigenous Peoples to articulate threats to their languages and to provide a forum for the cultural knowledge that is transmitted through the language and,

For UNPFII to call for the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Languages to gather testimony directly from Indigenous Nations and communities and to conduct a study regarding the conditions of Indigenous languages of the world and in collaboration with Indigenous communities and Nations to determine mechanisms to diminish the marginalization of Indigenous languages and most importantly, to develop strategies to effectively impact Indigenous language revitalization.

We respectfully call your attention to the apparent need to make on-site registration forms to the UN Permanent Forum available in other necessary languages.

We strongly assert our right to free, prior and informed consent, and that any Indigenous Language initiatives must observe and recognize all articles of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and include the full participation of Indigenous Peoples in its development.

We thank the distinguished members of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for this time and through this intervention; trust that we have represented the language concerns of all Indigenous Peoples.