

Statement On Agenda 6: Reviewing the United Nations System; Theme: Environment.
For Presentation at The First Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
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Baghunu! Fanomho! Fakae! Kina Fabokoboko Kina Fa bokoboko

We Indigenous Peoples have come far in seeking justice on our homelands, thus the establishment of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues within the UN Family is a positive step that I wish to acknowledge on behalf of my people.

Mr. Chair, I represent the Zazao Environmental Rights Organisation of the Province of Isabel, Solomon Islands in the Pacific Basin Region. It is a grassroots formed and based organization working to protect the environment and the promotion of the rights of youths and women. I must say here that I come from a part of the world that is remote and we are late comers in facing the waves of problems facing indigenous peoples of the world today, questioning our very survival. I come here to join in solidarity with my indigenous brothers and sisters from the four corners of the world in the first session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

What I want to share here may have been said and shared many times in the various fora dealing with indigenous peoples issues and rights where we indigenous peoples have entered to fight for our rights, but I still want to say and share them in this forum.

Mr. Chairman. I am not a lawyer, or a human rights specialist in order to be here or to be in the other processes which I have participated in over the years. I am only an indigenous hunter and fisherman. This is my only qualification and for this I am proud of. It has now even taken me into the United Nations Family to fish and to hunt for support, respect and recognition.

Mr. Chair, the environment, natural resources and land are issues of great importance for us indigenous peoples and because of this, we have maintained and cared for them for years immemorable. Today, the accelerating processes of globalisation have exposed the vulnerabilities of indigenous peoples when left to the logic of states and markets, without adequate protection for our rights which has resulted in immense pressures exerted on our lands, natural resources and environment and questioning our very own survival. As I speak now, I can hear the sounds of chainsaws and bulldozers while trees are falling, birds screaming and fish drowning in the indigenous land of Zazao.

I wish to recommend that in the absence of international standards for control and monitoring of Transnational Companies and governments activities, the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples should be used as the only instrument which bears the interest of indigenous peoples in the minimal terms and bears the indigenous spirit of free

and prior informed consent. By saying so, I wish to acknowledge and share the sentiments and insights stressed by the Cordillera Peoples Alliance and Tebtebba Foundation earlier this morning.

Second point in my statement: As a person coming from the Pacific Region as well, I wish to raise another issue of utmost importance for my region. This is the issue of climate change and global warming. May I request the Permanent Forum to call upon members of the United Nations to be meaningful and practical in understanding the situation faced by small island states of the Pacific and to speed up the process in the climate change related convention.

Mr. Chairman, it is indeed an honour to be able to address this forum and I wish to thank the UN Voluntary Fund on Indigenous Populations for financing my participation in the first session of the permanent forum.

I wish also to congratulate our representative to the Permanent Forum, Ms. Mililani Trusk upon her appointment as member for the Pacific Basin Region. We have heard your statement with great respect and wish to pledge our support during your time in office and we will work together in solidarity to protect and uphold the rights of the indigenous peoples and lands of the Pacific Basin.

Considering our mari-time nature, we have a lot to face as our canoes have been destroyed by our colonizers and replaced by boats and planes which we need a lot of resources to have access to. Though we have started long ago, this is only the beginning. Let us work together to rebuild our canoes.

Finally, I want to share the story of your boat and my canoe and the same river of life shared by one of the delegates earlier this week. I want to change it a bit and request we all jump into my canoe instead of staying in your boat. This way, we will be in the same canoe sharing the same sea of life working in true and meaningful partnership as this forum emphasizes.

I am sure that now with our clear eyes and cleaned ears, we can listen and see that we move in the right direction.

Let me also acknowledge the efforts of the various UN agencies who have made interventions earlier. Let us be together here to share ideas to direct our future work so that we Indigenous Peoples can receive meaningful respect and recognition of our rights and as peoples. Let us correct history rather than repeating history.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank you very much for giving me the floor and in closing I wish to say PACIFICA to each and all of you.

Thank you