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**Written statement of the Innu Council of Nitassinan  
(NGO in consultative status to ECOSOC)  
2nd Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
15 May 2003  
Agenda Item 4a): Economic and Social Development**

Mr. Chairman,

1. For too long, Indigenous Peoples have been – and still are in many parts of the Indigenous world – at the outskirts of growing national economies.

2. National economic indicators are strikingly conclusive that we must act on this matter concerning Indigenous economic and social development.

3. Furthermore, a growing integration of international economies will have in the future a decisive impact on the economic and social rights of the Indigenous Peoples.

4. For these reasons, we believe that

- increased and direct participation of Indigenous Peoples in the development of their natural resources in their traditional lands;
- increased access and participation of Indigenous Peoples in national economies;
- and a better partnership between Indigenous Peoples and the private sector;

are all ingredients in the realization of financial autonomy for Indigenous Peoples.

5. Mr. Chairman, financial autonomy for Indigenous Peoples give to Indigenous Peoples the tools to establish their own priorities in social and economic matters, especially priorities that are aimed to respond to the needs of Indigenous children.

6. The Innu Healing Fund (<http://www.innuhealingfoundation.org/>) is a striking example of a "market-tested" partnership between an Indigenous group and the private and public sectors that have allowed the Innu to establish their own priorities especially in regard to Innu Children. The Innu Healing Foundation is a new organization created to manage an alliance of business, institutions, governments, communities and individuals to work with the Innu Nation on a number of healing strategies, including an important fund raising campaign. The Foundation has been granted charitable status by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada, is the Foundation's Patron.

7. However, a lot remains to be achieved. The Innu Council believes that an improved partnership between Indigenous Peoples and the private sector and the national economic agents is needed.

8. Therefore, the Innu Council believes that an important and decisive player in Indigenous economies is missing here in the work of the Permanent Forum.

9. Mr. Chairman, we reiterate our **recommendation** we conveyed to you last year by inviting the Chairman of the Permanent Forum to facilitate a technical meeting between the World Trade Organization and Indigenous Peoples in the framework of the next meeting of the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples in Geneva or at the next session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues.

Delivered by  
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