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UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Eighth Session New York, 18-29, 2009

RE: Agenda Item 3C: Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples

Joint Statement of Dr. Wilton Littlechild, IPC, International Organization for Indigenous Resource Development, Regional Chief of Treaties 6, 7 and 8 (Alberta), Assembly of First Nations, with support of the Indigenous Youth Caucus

Thank you Madame Chairperson. This year's session places special emphasis on implementation and a detailed review of previous recommendations. Our delegation calls attention to the UN Permanent Forum second session on the theme of Indigenous children and youth. We called on the Committee on the Rights of the Child to hold its annual Day of General Discussion on the rights of Indigenous children.

I had the great honour to present the keynote address on behalf of the UN Permanent Forum to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on September 19, 2003. You will recall they subsequently adopted specific recommendations aimed primarily at States parties, but also UN entities, human rights mechanisms, civil society, donors, the World Bank and regional development banks.

One of the desired outcomes was a general comment on the rights of Indigenous children as provided for by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. On January 30th this year it was again an honour to be present in Geneva when the General Comment No. 11 (2009) CRC/C/GC/11 was adopted. We (Councilman Henry Raine, former Chief Victor Buffalo) had occasion to personally thank the committee members, in particular, the outgoing member from Canada for this historic decision.

Madame Chair, we present this intervention for the record to formally thank the UN Permanent Forum and Secretariat and through you the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In your review of recommendations this is one you can highlight as completed as it begins a new relationship and focus on Indigenous children.

"The primary objective of this general comment is to provide States with guidance on how to implement their obligations under the Convention with respect to Indigenous children" (paragraph 12) It importantly links the specific reference to the rights of Indigenous children in a number of articles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. (article 15, 21, 22, 24, 30, 31...) Also to the important preambular paragraph which states "Recognizing in particular the rights of Indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights of the child".

We therefore respectfully recommend two following recommendations:

1. We call upon UNPF8 session to urge all State parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as to apply the CRC General Comment No. 11 (2009) in implementing their obligations.
2. We call upon UNPF8 to endorse and adopt the proposed Resolution referenced in the Global Caucus Statement and which respectfully submit, on the Rights of the Indigenous Child to Health and Education pursuant to the Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly (63rd Session) on 13 March 2009. (A/Res/63/241)

Finally, on a related matter we note the very important UNPF report (E/C.19/2009/CRP.1 [26 January 2009]) which we would recommend be considered as an official United Nations or UN Permanent Forum document. Thank you for your consideration on this very important matter.

W Littlechild IPC

Chief Wilton Littlechild, IPC
May 19, 2009