

Debby

Eleventh Session, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
New York, 7-18 May 2012

Statement on Agenda Item 6: Half-day discussion on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to food and food sovereignty

Presented on behalf of the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus:

Thank you Mister Chairperson,

We, the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, greatly appreciate the opportunity to address this Forum as to the pressing need for food security and food sovereignty for Indigenous children and youth around the world. Traditional foods represent more than just a source of sustenance; they are an integral part of our indigenous identity and help define the story of our peoples from our Elders to us. Food sovereignty comes from right to our land and self-determination. However, indigenous peoples often face the difficulty of claiming their food sovereignty, due to loss of land, assimilation of culture and conflicts over land.

We recommend the Forum,

1. That Member States recognise and respect the right of food sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples to the use of their lands and resources for community managed and initiated food security and education programs (traditional and/or contemporary), including hunting, fishing, gathering, animal raising and farming. Member States and UN agencies must recognise the strong cultural and spiritual bond Indigenous Peoples have with their land, which is reflected through our stories passed from our Elders to us as youth. For this, we urge the Permanent Forum to recommend for Member States and non-state bodies to take such steps to implement the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of Food Security, approved by the Committee on World Food Security on May 11th, 2012.
2. Endorsement or collaboration by United Nation agencies, Member States and Indigenous academics as to community-based participatory research on different economic, education and cultural models and best practices on Indigenous youth and child food security programs. Such UN agencies include the UN International Children's Fund, World Health Organisation, World Bank Group and the Food and Agriculture organisation. We also urge the Forum and relevant UN agencies to conduct a comprehensive research to put special attentions on Genetic Modified Organisms and their health, social, cultural and economic impacts with special focus on indigenous youth and children.

3. That Indigenous youth are more involved in United Nation mechanisms, concerning environmental matters through participation, including the Eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in October 2012, UN Conference on Sustainable Development this year and all preparatory meetings, supported by Indigenous leaders, their member states and United Nations agencies. Food security and sovereignty is affected by the impact activities related to our lands and water resources. Therefore it would be important that Indigenous youth are involved in these mechanisms to be ready for future challenges.

4. That the United Nations International Telecommunication Union liaises with different regional and grass-root indigenous media and communicates to Indigenous youth to promote and share traditional food utility knowledge and best customary practice. Such information must be subject to the free, prior and informed consent of such Indigenous Peoples and youth.

Indigenous children and young people are among some of the most vulnerable persons in the world in health, education and poverty. Without the right to lands and resources and the introduction of colonist foods, Indigenous youth are at higher risk of nutrition-related conditions than non-Indigenous youth, such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity. As our population is expected to grow to 9 billion by 2050, it is important to ensure that our children and youth are protected against food insecurity by ensuring our food sovereignty.

The success of these recommendations will depend on the ability of Member States and UN agencies to implement key principles of the UNDRIP, including the freedom of self-determination, protection of culture and free, prior and informed consent.

We thank you for the consideration of these recommendations to the Forum, Member States, and different arms of the United Nations, and to our Elders as well. Our right to food security and our right to our lands for food sovereignty are crucial for Indigenous youth and children to grow healthy and within their culture. This also makes a major difference to our right to our identity, which is important for our right and need for self-determination under the Declaration.

Thank you, Mr Chair.