

STATEMENT TO THE PERMANENT FORUM BY THE INDIGENOUS FELLOWS

Greetings Mr Chairman, Elders, Indigenous peoples, representatives, youth, and all members and participants of the Permanent Forum.

The following statement was jointly prepared by both the previous and present Indigenous peoples who have participated in the training called the Indigenous Fellowship Program, delivered within the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our perspectives as young Indigenous persons. We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the many Indigenous elders, leaders and members who have struggled to ensure that we finally acquired a forum in which the voices of our peoples will be addressed seriously within the system of the United Nations.

We envisage that the Permanent Forum should act as a space to unite and strengthen Indigenous peoples by sharing and exchanging both information and experience.

We are young Indigenous peoples who are the proud descendents of our ancestors. We realize the critical and sometimes daunting responsibility that we bear to advance the plight of our peoples. We continue to maintain these aspirations. We are rooted and guided by our cultural traditions. We also have the ability to move with modern trends that further the social, cultural and political goals of our nations.

We, the Fellows, have had extensive international human rights training. These skills would be of great benefit to the progression of this forum as we provide an important link between Indigenous organizations, our communities and the international agencies.

Mr Chairperson and members of the Permanent Forum, we young Indigenous peoples would like to propose the following four recommendations for your consideration:

1. The establishment of a permanent Indigenous Youth Forum that will enable young voices to raise their concerns in an international forum. This was previously recommended at the World Conference on Racism and further supported by the High Commissioner, Mary Robinson. We are sure that you would support the proposal that an Indigenous young person hold a space within this forum with consideration to gender equity.
2. The establishment of Indigenous units within all UN specialized agencies. Each agency should develop similar Indigenous fellowship programs as offered by the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights. Furthermore, the UN agencies would benefit in their consultation procedures by utilizing the established network of Indigenous fellows who have acquired international human rights training.
3. We support the recommendation to establish its own secretariat for the Permanent Forum. We further suggest that Indigenous peoples who have been provided with the necessary international skills be utilized for technical support within the operations of the Permanent Forum secretariat.
4. We request support from the Permanent Forum to convene a meeting which would enable all Indigenous Fellows to establish networks and develop further our understanding of addressing our issues internationally.

We would like to give special thanks to the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, who is the coordinating body of the Fellowship Program and the UN agencies who have contributed to the program, we encourage their continued assistance.

In conclusion we would like to bring your attention to the fact that Indigenous young peoples have valuable tools to offer to this forum. They are necessary contributors that wish to work in partnership to advance the vision of our peoples.

Thank you.

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