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**STATEMENT TO THE 10<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

**Agenda Item 7: Water and Indigenous Peoples  
Tuesday, May 24, 2011**

**Submitted by the Global Indigenous Peoples' Caucus  
Read by Tonya Gonnella Frichner**

Thank you Madame Chair, members of the Permanent Forum, governments, UN bodies, representatives, and Brothers and Sisters, for letting us address you on this urgent matter.

Indigenous Peoples have an intrinsic relationship with the natural world. Our Mother Earth nurtures, shelters, and nourishes us, and we are spiritually connected through her waterways – veins and arteries to the plants, animals, places and our oceans where we continue developing our distinct cultures and identities since time immemorial. Water is sacred, water is life. Water has its own-life force. It is connected to spirit. Water is essential for the beginning of life, conception, and we are washed by water at the end of life. We are cradled by water before we are born. Water gives life to all our foods and medicines. Water is connected to our identity. Protect the source! Indigenous guardianship of the sources of water, the headwaters, and the springs is essential to protect water, to protect life. The ocean is the sacred mat of the world, and connects us all. Water carries the melody of life.

Today we increasingly witness an attack on water - Aquacide, which is the multiple contaminations, diversions, and deprivations of our waters and skies to continue their course as Life-providers. Dams, extractive industrial and mega-agricultural developments, and water privatization and commodification are involved in these violations of the UNDRIP and the sanctity of water as a life-giving force.

Articles 25 through 32 of the Declaration outline these rights so we may determine development strategies with states, UN-related bodies, and corporations on our lands and to maintain, control, protect and develop our cultural heritage and traditional knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora.

We, as the Global Indigenous Peoples Caucus, fully endorse the People's Agreement of Cochabamba adopted at the World Peoples' Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth held in April 2010 in Bolivia.

We commend the General Assembly for passing The Human Right to Water and Sanitation but echo the sentiments of the Plurinational State of Bolivia

that the human right to water has yet to be expressly and fully recognized, despite references to it in various international instruments.

Therefore:

- 1) We call upon the UNPFII to set the theme of Water as a Human Right for the Permanent Forum in 2014 or in the alternative, 2016.
- 2) Recalling recommendation 78 of Session 7 (2008), we urge the UNPFII to recommend to the UN ECOSOC, in coordination with UNEP, a call for an official *UN Experts Meeting on Water*, which includes Indigenous Peoples' regional representatives, that specifically initiates a close review and assessment of Water allocation, use, regulation, and access policies that affect the rights of Indigenous Nations, the health of our Peoples and ecosystems, and that of future generations. This high level Experts Meeting can explore and establish indicators of Water Well-being for Indigenous Nations, and the world community, particularly in the light of increasing negative water impacts due to climate change. The Experts Meeting should be held at the same time as the aforementioned Permanent Forum session on Water as a Human Right.
- 3) We reiterate that any policies by governments, UN-related bodies and corporations related to Water must observe, recognize and implement all articles of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which affirm the right to Water with full and effective participation of all Indigenous Peoples and nations with our free, prior and informed consent*.
- 4) We urge the Permanent Forum to work with all pertinent UN bodies whose mandate relates to water including, but not limited to, UNEP, UNDP, WHO, FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNHRC, and others to provide full financial support for an Indigenous World Forum on Water and Peace, that is led by, planned and developed with full representation of Indigenous Peoples from all regions throughout the entire process.
- 5) We recommend the Permanent Forum reject the Rio+20 definition of "*green economy*" and create a collaborative definition of "green economy" that does not deprive Indigenous Peoples from our access and use of our *water ways*, including the foreshores and seabeds of our oceans, our biodiversity, that places them into a culturally-and-ecologically-destructive market system that benefits few shareholders.

We respectfully request that our recommendations be incorporated into the final report and thank you for your time and consideration.