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NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDERS LEGAL SERVICES SECRETARIAT  
(NAILSS)  
Australia  
(In Administration)

STATEMENT OF NAILSS AUSTRALIA  
AS A CONSULTATIVE STATUS NGO  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

16TH SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS (WGIP)

Agenda Item 10

As many here will be aware, NAILSS has been deeply involved in the development process for the establishment of a Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples.

That involvement has continued since the First Workshop in Copenhagen in Denmark.

Once again, NAILSS congratulates the Governments of Denmark, of the Greenland Home Rule Government, and of Chile in their support of this development process.

NAILSS also commends the Government of Spain and the city of Madrid as well as the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity for the courage shown in Madrid in taking the first real steps within the UN system to enable Indigenous people to demonstrate their skills in managing and co-chairing an International forum such as occurred in Madrid.

Sadly, as the Convention Ambassador stated in the working group in his lengthy speech, the politics of paranoia infesting some governments prevailed in Bratislava in May to exclude Indigenous peoples from repeating the productive demonstration of skills in the conduct of the final part of the Conference of the Parties (COP).

Many here will recall the proposal made in this Forum last year by NAILSS.

Once again, NAILSS proposes that a First Permanent Forum session should be held in Sydney, Australia at the same time as the Year 2000 Olympics.

If the Australian Government and its permanent representative are honest about Indigenous affairs as apart from ~~troops~~ troops and flu injections, then NAILSS ~~proposes~~ proposes ~~that~~ that the Government of Australia ~~join~~ join Chile, Denmark, Spain and this Working Group in advancing seriously the progress of development on the establishment of a Permanent Forum.

This can be done by the Government of Australia offering before the close of this session ~~to~~ to host a Permanent Forum session on an experimental basis in Australia.

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NAILSS is prepared here and now under the expert guidance of the Working Group to enter into constructive negotiations with the Governments of Australia and New Zealand for the finalisation of constructive arrangements for the conduct of such a first permanent forum session.

Let us worry about whether it is a working group or a council level body later.

Let us give those young indigenous people who will one day become elders and leaders an opportunity to commence their participation in the international community at the time when the young sports men and women of the world will be gathering in Sydney at the dawn of the new Century.

We hope this constructive proposal will build better confidence of Indigenous people in the words spoken by Governments such as Australia and will allow better progress on the establishment of a Permanent Forum before we are all very much older.

END.