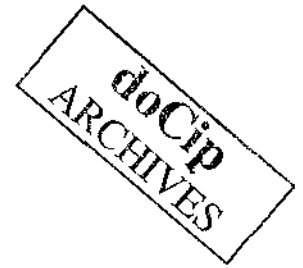


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**INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S CAUCUS STATEMENT
ON GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

**3rd Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
May 10, 2004, United Nations, New York, New York**



[Introduction and Greetings]

This statement on general recommendations for the Permanent Forum is presented on behalf of the International Indigenous Women's Caucus.

We address you today as grandmothers, mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, and granddaughters about issues concerning the lives of our families and homes. In our communities, which numerous United Nations agencies have acknowledged are at the bottom of every socio-economic indicator, worldwide, we, as women occupy the very lowest levels. Thus, even among the estimated 300 million Indigenous people in the world, we are the poorest, those with the lowest life expectancy, those with least access to health care, and the most illiterate population. The fact that we cannot cite statistics on these facts speaks to the severe lack of data among Nation States and UN agencies and the severe need for disaggregated data on Indigenous women. It has also made perhaps millions of Indigenous women invisible to the UN system.

Recognizing the importance of this session to us, we met for two days prior to the beginning of this session to recognize and prioritize issues of importance to our peoples. We are here today, accompanied by the spirit of many who have not been able to come, as the result of the hard work, dedication, and suffering of many who have fought before us. So we come here today, knowing who we are, increasingly aware of our rights, and with commitment that extends beyond our generation to this work.

In preparing our recommendations, we reviewed declarations from regional Indigenous women's organizations and caucuses. We applaud the support of UN agencies, as well as human rights organizations, for supporting these regional meetings. They include the Fourth Continental Meeting of Indigenous Women, held in Lima, Peru in April 2004; the Second Continental Conference of Indigenous Women of Africa, held in Nairobi, Kenya in April 2004; the Second Asian Women's Conference, held in Baguio City, Philippines, in March 2004; and the Conference on Indigenous Women and Gender Relations, held in Fredensburg, Denmark, in April, 2004. These conferences have allowed us to contribute to the debate and analysis on our own development from our own perspectives as Indigenous women. Thus we now bring these recommendations to this high level, with expectations that the many aspirations and hopes of our sisters will be taken seriously and that this body, the Permanent Forum, will be accountable in its response.

Over the next two weeks you will hear specific recommendations for each of the thematic sessions from the Indigenous Women's Caucus. At this time we would like to present the following general recommendations:

1. First, we are painfully aware that many of our Indigenous sisters could not be here because of visa problems they experienced in trying to travel to New York. This has been a concern for every session of the Permanent Forum. We urge the Permanent Forum to work with the Economic and Social Council to alleviate the numerous problems experienced by Indigenous representatives who cannot participate in this process. Without serious attention to these problems, full and effective participation cannot happen.
2. We recommend that the Permanent Forum urge the Committee on the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), to pay special attention to issues of discrimination related to Indigenous women, including women living under colonization. We recommend that they organize a meeting, in collaboration with Indigenous women, with the objective of beginning a process to develop and adopt General Recommendations on Indigenous Women; this process could include the establishment of a working group comprised of Indigenous women. We are dismayed by the lack of attention by the Commission to issues of discrimination regarding Indigenous women.
3. We recommend that the Permanent Forum call for a general conference on Indigenous Women by UN agencies such as UNIFEM, UNESCO, UNDP, and UNPF to develop a global agenda in Indigenous women. We are aware that historically, we have been a priority only when we are subjects of experiments. Thus, we believe that only when UN agencies raise awareness and appreciation for the cosmovision of Indigenous Peoples can they respectfully and effectively work with them. We urge the Permanent Forum to advise UN development agencies of the need for culturally appropriate development projects. Additionally, we urge the Permanent Forum to support the hiring of Indigenous women to key positions in UN agencies, so they participate as decision makers and not in marginal positions.
4. We recommend that the Permanent Forum encourage all UN agencies whose activities have an impact on Indigenous women, to provide regular reports, prior to each session of the Permanent Forum, on *their* policies and programs directed to them. Many UN agencies that are not necessarily focused on the issues of Indigenous women, nonetheless participate in social and economic development activities that often have harmful impacts on the health and welfare of Indigenous women, and recommend that a report be issued as soon as possible, and prior to a scheduled Permanent Forum session.
5. We reiterate recommendation number 81 from the Second Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which asked the Working Group on Indigenous Populations to undertake a study on genocidal and ethnocidal practices perpetrated on Indigenous Peoples, including programmes for sterilization of Indigenous women and girls, the use of Indigenous communities as subjects for nuclear testing or storage of radioactive waste and the testing of

unapproved drugs on Indigenous children and peoples. We suggest adding cocaine to the study.

6. We recommend that the Permanent Forum urge the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People take the issue of the impact of armed conflicts on Indigenous women as the main topic of his 2005 report, and that he carry out an annual review of the implementation of Security Council Resolution No. 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and inform the Security Council on progress. Historically, Indigenous Peoples have been caught in the middle of armed conflicts on every continent; this is the case today in numerous states such as Colombia, Nepal, Burma, Democratic Republic of Congo, Bangladesh, Maluku, West Papua, Solomons and New Caledonia, and Indigenous women and children continue to suffer wartime atrocities committed by all sides in armed conflict. We also urge the Special Rapporteur to carry out research missions focused on the human rights situations of Indigenous women and children in armed conflicts and to publish the results.
7. Indigenous women have a vital role to play in the protection and conservation of the environment. We recommend that the Permanent Forum urge all UN bodies and agencies in their environment-related work to ensure the full and effective participation of Indigenous women. As such, measures to include Indigenous women's environmental knowledge must be incorporated. We also recommend that the Permanent Forum request the convening of a workshop on "Indigenous Women, Traditional Knowledge and the Convention on Biological Diversity". We further recommend that Permanent Forum encourage all UN bodies and agencies to include Indigenous women in all of their official policies, decisions and programmes of work, including their development and implementation
8. We reiterate recommendation No. 37 from the Second Session, in which the Permanent Forum recommended that "a meeting of international financial institutions be convened, with the participation of the Forum, to consider issues related to their policies, procedures and relationships concerning Indigenous Peoples, and that a report of the meeting be prepared for consideration" at the following session of the Forum. We urge that, in this process, special attention be given to the issue of global privatization policies of lands, territories and natural resources and their effects on Indigenous Peoples.

As Asian women stated in the Baguio Declaration, "globalization is accelerating the alienation, privatization, commercialization and theft of community forests, lands, waters and traditional medicinal plants causing impoverishment and generating ill health for our peoples." In Africa and Asia, for example, parliaments have adopted privatization policies to the detriment of Indigenous Peoples and their communities. The incorporation of Indigenous Peoples in the cash economy has eroded self-reliant subsistence activities and women's role in production, economy and community life.

9. We recommend that the mandate of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues be expanded to include "Governance, Treaties and other International Agreements".

At the turn of the 21st century, the unfettered forces of neo-liberal globalisation, continued colonization, statist militarism and development aggression are violating our inherent rights and fundamental freedoms and threatening our very survival as distinct peoples. As Indigenous Peoples and as women, we suffer multiple burdens, underpinned by racial, cultural, religious and gender discrimination.

In closing, we once again impress upon the Permanent Forum the need for a monitoring mechanism, one that would assess the status of recommendations and reports made by the Permanent Forum. We strongly recommend that the Permanent Forum ask for commitment by UN agencies, as evidenced by budget allocations and concrete timelines for addressing the Permanent Forum's recommendations.

Finally, we join our Indigenous brothers and sisters in asking that the Permanent Forum support an additional Decade on Indigenous Peoples and urge Nation States to commit their political will to the adoption of the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Indigenous Women's Caucus will be making specific recommendations in each mandated area, and by region throughout this session.

Thank you.