

DRAFT



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Statement by Mililani Trask
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Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I want to begin by acknowledging the Secretariat for all of their work, the members of the United Nations family, the nations and the specialized agencies and organs that have come now to present their interventions on a very difficult agenda.

I want to acknowledge also the representatives of observer states and not least my brothers and sisters of the Indigenous world. I want particularly to acknowledge the Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific Basin for honoring me by nominating me to this position.

We in the Pacific ^{Basin} ~~Basins~~ continue to live with the sad legacy of colonization and I want you to know that I will honor the obligation that you have given to me and during the time that I sit in this chair I will do everything that I can with your support to raise the issue of colonization so that we can work together to eradicate the remnants of colonization and imperialism..

My dear friends we have come to New York City to celebrate what in my estimation is the most momentous event in the history of the United Nations. For the first time in the history of this esteemed body there has been created an organ which brings together Indigenous Peoples with States on an equal basis –something that has never before been achieved.

We are certainly entitled to celebrate this most historic event. But I want to remind everyone here that as we opened yesterday from the hours of 10 to 6, during the time that we celebrated and heard the laudatory speeches, United Nations statistics tell us that a million Indigenous People died. They died of war and bloodshed, died of poverty. They died of diseases that long ago were eradicated in the developed world. They died of homelessness and they died in desperation. They died in marginalization. Never forget what the statistics tell us because this will give urgency and particular poignancy to our work.

My dear friends we no longer have the luxury of wallowing in the quagmire of endless discussion and dialogue. We are called to address the issues of Indigenous Peoples and when you look at our mandate it is so broad that it gives cause to raise fear in our hearts. We must now address the issues of education, of culture, economic and social development, health. We must somehow organize and orchestrate all of the activities of every agency and organ within the United Nations system. We must create for the first time a global repository of Indigenous Peoples' and it must be accessible on an equal basis to every State and to every Indigenous community no matter how poor, no matter how marginalized. This is our obligation.

We can no longer enjoy the luxury of the old way where we come to the United Nations with instructions from States or directives from Indigenous Peoples' Nations taking intractable positions. Let us close the chapter on that inefficient method of proceeding and let us all make the commitment that we will be innovative in addressing the awesome mandate that has been given to us.

Observer States take a message to your policy makers that the time of drafting instructions and passing them to your diplomatic teams to fulfill has now passed. Be our messenger. Let your presidents and your congresses and parliaments know that we will call on them to demonstrate their good faith and their flexibility to come to the table in the sense of true partnership.

Indigenous Nations return to your Councils of Elders tell them that we also must reexamine the intractable positions we have taken --not to surrender our commitment to human rights, never to betray our unqualified right to self determination but only to question ourselves to see if we have expended every effort in the cause of our Peoples to find new procedures and processes, to open dialogues and doors that perhaps we closed because we were wounded by colonialization .

Now we must all reconsider the roles that we will play. When I look at the dictates of my mandate, all of the areas I must fulfill, organizing and orchestrating all of the agencies, creating an international data base in all the languages of the world I say to myself. "How can I possibly succeed with this?"

I would be remiss in my obligation if I did not bring this issue to the floor at the very outset. There isn't any way that we are going to succeed in this mandate because we have not been given the ways and means, the fiscal resources, the independent secretariat that we need to address these issues. How is it possible?

When we look at a body as great and as significant as the United Nations --let me challenge you to look at the budget of the United Nations, of the agencies with the hundreds of millions of dollars afforded to agencies and bodies that have one or two points in their mandate. With sixteen individuals with a mandate this broad how can we succeed? The truthful answer is a simple one: we cannot because we do not have the finances. We are beginning with a fiscal crisis.

And so let me ask the Chair and Secretariat to move with all due haste to meet with the President of ECOSOC, with Nations, Agencies and Private Foundations so that we might gather the finances we need to attend to the task we have been given. We do not have the luxury of tarrying for another 2 years in the biennial budget process. We simply cannot do that. When I look at systems that provide great financial resources to further their own agenda but do not provide the resources for Indigenous Peoples and People of Color what I see is institutionalized racism.

Let us meet this challenge at the outset. We don't want to be an example of institutionalized racism. We want to be an example of what real partnership is in this day and age. We are called upon to be innovative. Let us begin right now with a commitment from each and every one of us. One of the things that has always bothered me about the United Nations is that there is a fear here to get to the common link that we all share --those who are Indigenous and those who are not. We are all the Creator's children. We all share this. So in being innovative let us never be fearful in calling out for help to our own Spiritual foundation. This is the way we live as Indigenous Peoples. Let us help the organs and organizations and observers of Nation States --let us help them find this way.

So in closing let me thank you for this honor and let me call upon the Creator on behalf of everyone here to strengthen us in this endeavor, to help us to strike from our hearts and minds all thoughts of anger and discord, healing the wounds of colonization. Give us the strength to set aside the personal agendas of globalization and strengthen us, Creator, so that we will persevere in the cause of peace for humankind. Thank you.