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**UNITED NATIONS**  
**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**Third Session of the  
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

**(10 - 21 May 2004 – New York)**

**“Statement regarding the health and wellbeing of  
indigenous girls and women”**

***Presented by Sarah Thompson  
Office of the Children’s Commissioner Aotearoa New Zealand***

## **STATEMENT**

Mr Chairman and members of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, on behalf of Dr Cindy Kiro, Children's Commissioner, Aotearoa New Zealand, I am pleased to make the following recommendations regarding the health and wellbeing of indigenous girls and women.

The Children's Commissioner recommends that:

1. the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has a responsibility to actively promote the positive participation of indigenous girls and women in decisions affecting all aspects of their lives, both within the infrastructures and forums associated with the United Nations, as well as with States parties, communities and families of indigenous girls and women.
2. the active participation of indigenous girls and women in decisions affecting all aspects of their lives requires partnerships between adults, children and young people.
3. the United Nations Permanent Forum notes that the positive health and wellbeing of indigenous girls and women is affected by the following barriers:
  - (a) barriers within their own cultures and societies which prevent their health from being given priority by their communities and in relation to the dominant culture;

- (b) barriers associated with structural gendered inequality as well as structural, ethnic, cultural and religious inequality within both their society and in relation to the dominant society;
  - (c) barriers that result in the sexual coercion, exploitation and control of indigenous girls and women's reproductive health and wellbeing.
4. the United Nations Permanent Forum gives priority to non-government organizations and community-based initiatives (including Indigenous People's and United Nations organizations), which seek to reduce the incidents of violence and abuse, in all its forms, against indigenous girls and women.
  5. the WHO, UNICEF, UNDP and other relevant United Nations bodies, States parties, and NGOs develop an action plan immediately (based on the recommendations from this third session and other relevant previous UN sessions) to address the health concerns and positive development of all indigenous girls and women.
  6. The United Nations Permanent Forum note that some of the best solutions relating to the positive health and wellbeing of indigenous girls and women come from within indigenous communities, but that those communities may require additional support and resources from United Nations bodies, States parties and other relevant agencies to ensure the positive development and wellbeing of indigenous girls and women.

Thank you.