

# Indigenous World Association – UN/ECOSOC

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United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
May 7-18, 2012,  
United Nations Headquarters New York  
Agenda Item 7: Half-day discussion on the World Conference on  
Indigenous Peoples

Presented by Kenneth Deer, Indigenous World Association

Mr. Chairman,

The Indigenous World Association and the International Indian Treaty Council are looking forward to a new era in the United Nations with the announcement of a World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

This is the first time that the UN is having a world conference about **Peoples**. It is vastly different than a world conference about thematic issues like racism, climate change or human rights. It is world conference about **Peoples** with a right to self-determination.

The United Nations Charter begins with these words “We the **Peoples** of the United Nations”, and it further states ‘to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of **peoples**, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;”

Article 55 states “With a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of **peoples**, the United Nations shall promote:

1. Higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development;
2. Solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; and international cultural and educational cooperation; and
3. Universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.

Indigenous **Peoples** have been denied these rights as **Peoples** and the UN now has an opportunity to correct past injustices and create a new future for Indigenous Peoples.

We appeal to the member states of the United Nations to live up to the essential and fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which include respect for equal rights and self-determination of **Peoples**.

As well, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which further affirmed that Indigenous Peoples are Peoples in international law.

It is time for the UN to represent all members of the human family. It must look beyond its narrow self-interest and embrace a principle that not all Peoples are represented by states – especially when Indigenous peoples' rights are at stake.

The UN should return to the idealism that once made the UN a beacon of enlightenment and hope for a war weary world.

The UN should not be saddled by defining consensus as agreeing to the lowest common denominator. It must look upward and lead humanity to the highest standard possible. It cannot continue to be mired in old colonial thinking and outmoded concepts like the Doctrine of Discovery and racial superiority.

The World Conference on Indigenous Peoples gives the United Nations a grand opportunity to take a leap forward, to be more than the sum of its parts and to embrace Indigenous Peoples as equals in a manner that respects their rights and preserves world peace.

The United Nations should also do more than just open its doors but also open its minds and share this forum with Peoples who have been denied equality and dignity for far too long.

The rules and customs of the United Nations need to change to admit a segment of humankind that deserves to be represented and to participate in decisions that affect them.

Mr. Chairman, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues should urge that member states of the United Nations allow the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples. In a World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, our participation must be equal to states.

We recommend that the Permanent Forum:

- 1) Reiterate the recommendation in its May 2011 Report that "the equal, direct and meaningful participation by indigenous peoples throughout all stages of the World Conference is essential".
- 2) Express its appreciation for the positive role played by the Sami Parliament, Greenland Government and Sami Council, in spearheading and supporting the meetings of the Global Steering Committee and planning overall for the World Conference;
- 3) Recommend that the agenda and discussion for the WC include consideration of very important meetings that will have occurred in the between now and then, which directly address the implementation the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These include the outcome document from the International Indigenous Peoples International Forum at Rio + 20 (the WCSD) in June 2012, the 3rd UN Seminar on Treaties and Other Constructive Arrangements (July 2012) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Indigenous Women's Symposium on Environmental Reproductive health to be held in Bilwi Nicaragua in 2014.
- 3) The Permanent Forum should begin intensive studies to update the themes of their book on the State of the World's Indigenous Peoples to be ready for the World Conference so participants can have accurate and usable information.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman

Kenneth Deer