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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
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**Item 4(f): Culture**

**Joint Statement by**

1. Pacific Concerns Resource Center
2. Bangsa Adat Alifuru
3. Dewan Adat Papua
4. Na Koa Ikaika o Ka Lahui Hawai`i
5. Ka Lahui Hawai`i
6. `Ilio`ulaokalani Coalition
7. Prince Kuhio Hawaiian Civic Club
8. The Koani Foundation
9. Kamakakuokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies
10. Rapa Nui Parliament
11. Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu
12. Te Rapunga o Poutama
13. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)
14. Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA)
15. National Association of Community Legal Centres
16. National Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
17. Presentation Association
18. World Council of Churches (Australia)
19. Bureau of Consultation for West Papua Indigenous Community Development

**On behalf of the Pacific Caucus**

Mr Chairman

[NOTE: Attachment - Recommendations]

This statement has been prepared by the Pacific Caucus, and incorporates outcomes from the Pacific regional workshop held in Fiji in March 2004.

The Pacific region carries much of the cultural diversity of the world. For instance, UNESCO data indicates that almost one third of the world's 6000 languages are represented just in the region bounded by Australia, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.

The Pacific Caucus recognizes that the entire Pacific region is populated by Indigenous Peoples who wish to continue to maintain distinct cultural diversity including our identity, our dignity, our relationship with land and waters, our duties to our ancestors, our obligations to our future generations,

our laws, our indigenous knowledge, our knowledge systems, our languages, our heritage, our histories and our philosophies, all of which are bound together in indigenous wisdom.

We call for the United Nations and States to pass the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and to implement a second Decade on the World's Indigenous Peoples.

Mr Chairman, our lands and waters are integral to our cultures. The significance of land is not understood or respected, resulting in misguided policies by the States. To survive, including into the future generations, as Indigenous Peoples we will continue to assert our rights to self-determination.

Our cultural identity derives from within, and cannot be substituted or superimposed by States' policies. It is imperative our cultures be recognised as living and dynamic manifestations by the people.

We call for States to review their constitutions and legislation to guarantee the continued existence of the Indigenous Peoples. We emphasise that States must act without delay to recognise the land rights of Indigenous Peoples and ensure that Indigenous Peoples can utilise their lands.

To this purpose we ask that States implement into legislation the Akwe: Kon guidelines (E/C.19/2004.CRP3 Annex) relating to the lands and waters traditionally used by Indigenous Peoples, and which were approved at the Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of Parties (COP 7) in Year 2004.

States should ensure that sacred and significant areas, including Indigenous burial areas, are afforded adequate protections in accordance with Indigenous values. Where lands, waters, sacred areas or burial grounds are disturbed States shall ensure that the disturbances are remedied and suitably compensated in accordance with the values determined by the Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous burials that are or have been desecrated, regardless of whether they are ancient or recent burials, shall be restored or remedied in accordance with Indigenous values. Cultural objects that are sacred in Indigenous culture continue to be the property of the Indigenous Peoples. This requires that sacred objects, ancestral human remains and burial objects must be immediately released from museums and other holding institutions unless they obtain suitable authority from the Indigenous custodians.

Mr Chairman, Indigenous Peoples have the right to retain and protect their languages. States must ensure that Indigenous Peoples have the means through learning, literacy and media programs, including in education, public services and judicial systems. States must also ensure that Indigenous Peoples have the capacity to revive and develop their languages that have been impaired through acts of colonisation. The cost of these language initiatives must not be regarded as a burden upon the States resources but as an inherent responsibility of the State to the population.

In the Pacific region many States have established military bases and defence systems on Indigenous lands and waters. The region has also been subject to nuclear testing and movement of nuclear warheads and reactors. The militarisation of the Pacific region by non-Indigenous interests places all the Indigenous Peoples under unacceptable risks of extinction. The Pacific region must be demilitarised to eliminate or minimise this threat.

Military establishments have been acquired without regard to the Indigenous title over those lands, without the permission of the Indigenous Peoples and without regards to payments for use of these lands or waters. States must restore lands and waters acquired without the free and informed consent of the Indigenous Peoples, or establish bilateral agreements with the Indigenous Peoples.

Mr Chairman, UNESCO must establish global programs, of sufficient magnitude, to assist Indigenous Peoples to sustain, develop and repair their culture in its various manifestations. UNESCO should make more effort towards the survival of Indigenous languages that are at risk of extinction, and facilitate the development of Indigenous learning centres, including universities.

UNESCO must address the need to document indigenous cultures including creation histories, belief systems, spirituality, natural and customary law, protocols, science and technologies, Indigenous governance, health, education, justice systems, inventions, security, language, traditional knowledge on biodiversity, philosophy and ideology.

There should also be research to examine the impact of globalization on Indigenous culture, utilising Indigenous researchers.

Mr Chairman, in the Pacific region UNESCO should support the existing Indigenous Centres for Education and establish Indigenous Centres for Education and Culture for all the Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific. These centres must be developed and run by the Indigenous Peoples. States must also ensure that they provide funds to the Indigenous centres in amounts equal to their commitments to non-Indigenous education.

States have an obligation to ensure that UNESCO allocates adequate resources for the needs of Indigenous Peoples. States also have an obligation to provide resources for Indigenous Peoples to undertake landcare and land management activities, ensuring that the capacity exists to care and protect seas, and flora and fauna. States must ensure that resources are made available for Indigenous Peoples to care for Indigenous heritage, including management of ancient objects, art and art sites, and ceremonial sites.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The United Nations and States must pass the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and agree to a second Decade on the World's Indigenous Peoples.**
2. **States must review their constitutions and legislation to guarantee the continued existence of the Indigenous Peoples.**
3. **States must act without delay to recognise the land rights of Indigenous Peoples and ensure that Indigenous populations can utilise their lands.**
4. **a) States should ensure that sacred and significant areas, including Indigenous burial areas, are afforded adequate protections in accordance with values determined by Indigenous Peoples.**  
**b) Where lands, waters, sacred areas or burial grounds are disturbed States shall ensure that the disturbances are remedied and suitably compensated in accordance with the values of the Indigenous Peoples.**  
**c) Indigenous burials that are defiled, regardless of whether they are ancient or recent burials, shall be restored or remedied in accordance with Indigenous values.**  
**d) Sacred objects, ancestral human remains and burial objects must be immediately released from museums and other holding institutions unless they obtain suitable authority from the Indigenous custodians.**
5. **States must ensure that Indigenous Peoples have the means to protect and to maintain their languages through learning, literacy and media programs, including in education, public services and judicial systems.**
6. **States must ensure that Indigenous Peoples have the capacity to revive and develop their languages that have been adversely impaired through acts of colonisation. The cost of these language initiatives must not be regarded as a burden upon the States resources but as an inherent responsibility of the State to the population.**
7. **The Pacific region must be demilitarised.**
8. **States must restore lands and waters acquired without the free and informed consent of the Indigenous Peoples, or establish bilateral agreements with the Indigenous Peoples.**
9. **UNESCO must establish global programs of sufficient magnitude to assist Indigenous Peoples to sustain, develop and repair their culture in its various manifestations.**
10. **UNESCO should make more effort towards the survival of Indigenous languages that are at risk of extinction, and facilitate the development of Indigenous learning centres, including universities.**

- 11. UNESCO must address the need to document indigenous cultures including creation histories, belief systems, spirituality, natural and customary law, protocols, science and technologies, Indigenous governance, health, education, justice systems, inventions, security, language, traditional knowledge on biodiversity, philosophy and ideology.**
- 12. There should also be research to examine the impact of globalization on Indigenous culture, utilising Indigenous researchers.**
- 13. UNESCO should support the existing Indigenous Centres for Education and establish Indigenous Centres for Education and Culture for all the Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific. These centres must be developed and run by the Indigenous Peoples. States must also ensure that they provide funds to the Indigenous centres in amounts equal to their commitments to non-Indigenous education.**
- 14. States have an obligation to ensure that UNESCO allocates adequate resources for the needs of Indigenous Peoples.**
- 15. States have an obligation to provide resources for Indigenous Peoples to undertake landcare and land management activities, ensuring that the capacity exists to care and protect seas, and flora and fauna.**
- 16. States must ensure that resources are made available for Indigenous Peoples to care for Indigenous heritage, including management of ancient objects, art and art sites, and ceremonial sites.**

## To be inserted in item on Culture

### MALUKU

For centuries the Alifuru people has been a people of their own, with their own land, history, culture, language and identity. In the kapata kapata or traditional songs the history of the Alifuru people can be traced back into the MU civilization.

Western colonialism described the religion of the Alifuru's as animism, but in fact these indigenous people have always believed in Upu Lanite, the Creator of mother earth.

The adat istiadat or traditional custom law, the corner stone in the life of the indigenous Alifuru, has its own governing system. Although of patrilineal lineage, decisions cannot be made without the consult and/or consent of the woman. In the Alifuru cultural heritage the position of the woman is equal to that of the man.

Another important aspect in the cultural heritage is the pela-gandong, a unique bond of brotherhood or special relationship between several places that transcends distance and even religion,

The Alifuru's are peaceloving islanders that love music and songs to express their feelings. In the ethno- and genocidal war that the Indonesians are currently waging in Maluku, the Alifuru's, as any other indigenous people in the world, defend to the utmost their identity, cultural heritage and ancestral grounds.

### WEST PAPUA

The culture has always given the identity to the West Papuan people for centuries. But the Indonesians are now aiming to completely change the West Papuan identity into that of a Javanese one. The indigenous Papuan woman refuses to exchange their traditional dress into a Indonesian national custom adopted from Java..

This form of Javanisation is now in all aspects of life. Traditional Papuan arts are being patented by the Indonesians .. For example, the Patong-Asmat ,

The famous carvings made by the people from Asmat, are now reproduced in Java and Bali

The traditional Papuan art design after being patented by an Indonesian firm in Jakarta, is reintroduced in West Papua and by decree of the governor must be used by all West Papuans as an Indonesian design.

Horti culture is also being stolen by the Indonesians. Indonesian scientists from universities in Bogor, Djokdja and others governmental institutions come to West Papua, take a huge number of selective plants and fruits out of West Papua, give them other names and grow them in other parts of Indonesia as Indonesian traditional plants and fruits.

The pride of West-Papua, the bird of paradise, has become rare. The fear of West Papua is would the next generation know lthe birds of paradise only from pictures later?

The Indonesian government send in governmental multi nationals to invest in West Papua but without the consent or consultation of the indigenous landowners. The sacred places destroyed, the ecological system ruined forced the indigenous Papuans to move deeper into the interior of the country and pick up again their nomadic lifestyle.

With their arrival the Indonesians also change the traditional names of the places into Indonesian ones.

Traditional markets (souvenirs, carvings etc.) have become Indonesian commercial enterprises. Facilitated and funded financially by the local Indonesian authorities they became the official Indonesian souvenir centers.

Besides the existing traditional government of West Papua the Indonesian authorities created parallel to this another traditional government to influence and confuse the local indigenous Papuans.

When the indigenous West Papuans express their authentic traditions the church would call it a sin, and the (Indonesian) authorities separatism.