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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination
and Protection of Minorities

Working Group on Indigenous Peoples

29 July - 2 August, 1996

Mr. Ron Jameman

Agenda Item 6: Consideration of a Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples

Madam Chairperson, we thank you once again for giving us the opportunity to address this forum on this important issue to the ongoing development in the area of Indigenous and human rights. The concept of a "Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples within the United Nations system" is welcomed by the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations with cautious optimism and we feel that it could potentially be another very usefull and positive forum for Indigenous Peoples. We say another because we want to reiterate what we have stated in previous Working Groups that we should not sacrifice this Working Group for an as yet undetermined "Permanent Forum".

We want to thank the unselfish initiative of the Homerule Government of Greenland and the government of Denmark for co-hosting the workshop on the "Permanent Forum" in Copenhagen. It is only through workshops such as this that the Indigenous Peoples will be able to make informed determinations on the pros and cons of such a "Permanent Forum". The report and recommendations of this workshop are being thoroughly analyzed by us at the present time and we will be forwarding our views when we receive direction to do so by the leadership and Elders of our First Nations.

The Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations supports the recommendations contained in document E/CN.4/Sub2/AC.4/1996/5 wherein it is recommended that it would be appropriate for the "Permanent Forum" to report to the Economic and Social Council. Further that its mandate should cover issues such as human rights, health, development, environment, education and culture. This, however, should not be an exhaustive list. It is also very appropriate and necessary that a second workshop be held on the possible establishment of a "Permanent Forum", preferrably at a venue that is closer to Indigenous Peoples so that Indigenous participation could be more widespread. We further recommend that the membership of any upcoming workshops on the establishment of a Permanent Forum not be restricted only to those Indigenous groups which have been granted consultative NGO status with ECOSOC and, rather, that it accomodate as many Indigenous groups as possible, according to their relative interest with the items under discussion.

In conclusion, Madam Chairperson, the Confederacy fully supports the joint statement on this issue that was proposed and drafted as a result of our Indigenous Peoples Preparatory meeting held at the World Council of Churches on July 27 & 28, 1996.

Ay Hy, Thank You.