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Intervention to the Eighth Session of the
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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3b

Agenda Item 3b: Urban Indigenous Women and Migration

With warm greetings, Madame Chair, Brothers and Sisters of the Permanent Forum, and of the world community, I submit this intervention on Agenda Item 3b, regarding Urban Indigenous Women and Migration.

Mass migration of Indigenous Peoples to urban areas has been a major threat to Indigenous Peoples, especially Indigenous women, all over the world.

Removal and displacement, not migration, is the correct terminology for this agenda item. In the United States in particular, the experience has been Congressional laws beginning in the 1800's called the Vanishing Policies. Stemming from these, in the 1930's came the Indian Reorganization Act, the Relocation Policy and the Termination Act of the 1950's.

Removal and displacement has created loss of land and territories, military occupation, violence against our Peoples, particularly Indigenous women, domestic violence, street violence, racial discrimination, sex and human trafficking, HIV infection, gender inequality, human rights violations, poor quality of life and overall living conditions, to name just a few.

This is the situation of urban Indigenous Peoples found in the United States today, as well as for Indigenous women in urban centers throughout the world.

As reported in the soon to be released report on "Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration: A Review of Policies, Programs and Practices," by the UN Habitat, which confirms this reality. That the economic, political and sexual exploitation of Indigenous women cannot be ignored at a time when there is an increase in violence and trafficking of women and girls throughout the world.

Therefore, we make the following recommendations:

1. We stress that poverty, gender, ethnic and racial discrimination causes an increase in Indigenous Women's risk of becoming ill and being denied medical treatment, we therefore call on all governments to undertake a concerted global response to pursue all strategies for prevention and universal treatment of diseases affecting Indigenous women.

My colleagues and I who are assigned this focal point support the interventions offered by Global Indigenous Women's Caucus, the Quebec Native Women's statement, and that of the Native Women's Association of Canada.

2. We recognize the right and fundamental freedom for Indigenous Women to live free from violence.
3. Initiatives addressing female trafficking and forced prostitution have developed in Asia, Africa and Europe and most recently, "the Council of Europe's Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings," entered full force on February 2008, with many states still in the process of ratification. We strongly support its continued ratification.