

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Eleventh session, New York, 7-18 May 2012

Agenda Item 9: Future work of the Permanent Forum

Intervention by the International Indian Treaty Council and the Pacific Indigenous Peoples Caucus

Presented by Santi Hitorangi, Pacific Indigenous Peoples Caucus May 16th, 2012

The Pacific Region is a region of Ocean Peoples and Nations. The International Indian Treaty Council also has many affiliates and associates that are Island and Coastal Peoples. These include Indigenous Peoples from Alaska, California, Hawaii, Panama, Tuvalu, Nicaragua, Mexico, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Canada and other countries. We have received requests to pass on the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues their urgent concerns regarding a range of threats to the ocean homes and ecosystems on which their lives, subsistence, political, cultural and spiritual identify and ways of life depend. Moreover the health of the oceans, the largest ecosystem on Earth, affects everyone and all Peoples on the planet. The Oceans unite us all as Peoples and members of the human family.

Specific concerns expressed by a number of Indigenous Peoples in this regard include:

- 1) Increases in shipping in northern coastal and ocean areas as Arctic ice recedes, creating wide-spread and increasing stresses on ocean ecosystems and food sources
- 2) Lack of Indigenous voices or considerations for Indigenous Peoples' rights as affirmed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of indigenous Peoples in the International Maritime Organization (IMO's) discussions, policies and standard setting activities
- 3) Impacts of climate change including rising sea levels affecting island and coastal homelands and water systems of island and coastal peoples and decreasing Arctic ice, ocean temperature changes extreme weather conditions, such as hurricanes, which drastically impact Indigenous Peoples' food sources and subsistence practices
- 4) Diminishing ocean biodiversity affecting fish, plants, shore life and sea mammals vital for Indigenous Peoples subsistence and traditional economies due to commercial overfishing, habitat destruction and collapsing ecosystems, as well as contamination of ocean food sources due to oil spills, offshore drilling, toxic waste dumping, Persistent Organic Pollutants and Mercury.
- 5) Tourism and industrial development of shoreline areas with Free Prior Informed Consent, compromising culturally and spiritually important places,

impacting ceremonial and cultural practices, and preventing access to sacred sites, ceremonial, fishing and gathering areas, shell mounds, burial areas, sacred beaches, coastal wetlands and foreshores, violating the human and Treaty rights of Indigenous Peoples. One example among many is the tourism and extractive industry development by transnational corporations in Rapa Nui, and the resulting repression and criminalization of human rights defenders.

- 6) Impacts of militarization, including military bases, military toxics and wastes, conventional and nuclear weapons testing
- 7) Opportunities to share successful efforts by Indigenous Peoples regarding management and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems and food systems, including successful co-management arrangements with states and other governments where those exist.

Our recommendation to the UNPFII at this 11th session is therefore that the UNPFII hold a half day session on the theme of Indigenous Peoples and oceans at its 12th session in 2013, including a focus on articles 20, 25, 26 and 29 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This half day discussion will address all of the mandated focus areas of the Permanent Forum including health, environment, culture, education, economic and social development and human rights. It will address vital and urgent concerns of Indigenous Peoples in all regions. It will also provide an opportunity to share successful efforts by Indigenous Peoples regarding management and restoration of marine and coastal eco- and food systems, including successful co-management arrangements with states and other governments where those exist.

Thank you for considering this proposal from the Pacific Indigenous Peoples caucus and the International Indian Treaty Council.