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**STATEMENT
BOARDING SCHOOL CAUCUS
HEALTH AND BOARDING SCHOOL ABUSES**

Recommendations:

We call on the Permanent Forum to urge States to take responsibility for the continuing effects of human rights violations perpetrated by residential/boarding school policies against indigenous peoples. These continuing effects, in terms of health policies, include, but are not limited to:

- a) High suicide rates, particularly among teenagers, in indigenous communities
- b) High rates of substance abuse
- c) High rates of violence, including domestic violence, sexual violence, child abuse, and elder abuse.

As part of taking responsibility for these continuing effects of boarding school abuses, States should provide adequate resources to address these health problems, through funding indigenous-controlled programmes.

Background

While several States, such as Canada and Australia, have histories of residential/boarding school policies, this background information will focus on the United States, as it has taken no responsibility for addressing boarding school abuses.

During the 19th century and into the 20th century, American Indian children were forcibly abducted from their homes to attend Christian boarding schools as a matter of state policy. The stated rationale of the policy was to "save the child; kill the Indian." That is, U.S. colonizers, in their attempt to end Native control over their landbases, generally came up with two policies to address the "Indian problem." Some sectors advocated outright physical extermination of Native peoples. Meanwhile, the "friends" of the Indians, advocated cultural rather than physical genocide. Attendance at these boarding schools was mandatory, and children were forcibly taken from their homes for the majority of the year. Sometimes children might be taken from their homes and not returned until they were eighteen. They were forced to worship as Christians and speak English (native traditions and languages were prohibited). All of these policies were geared towards forcing the assimilation of Native children into mainstream society. Sexual/physical/emotional violence was rampant; and the U.S. government took virtually no measures to address sexual abuse in government-run schools until the late 1980s. Because Native children received no nurturing parenting in these schools, it became difficult for them to provide nurturing parenting to their children. As a result, Native peoples can generally trace the beginnings of violence, substance abuse, and dysfunctionality from the generation that began going to boarding school.

Abuses Committed In Boarding Schools include:

- * Sexual, Physical and Emotional Violence
- * Suppression of Native languages and religious/cultural traditions
- * Murder by beatings, poisonings, and starvation
- * Medical experimentation
- * Involuntary servitude
- * Deprivation of medical care
- * Inadequate food
- * Forced attendance
- * Forced removal from Native homes, sometimes for over a decade
- * Tracking of Native youth into low-income occupations

Boarding School Policies violate a number of international legal standards including:

- 1) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- 2) The Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- 3) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- 4) The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,
- 5) The Convention on the Rights of the Child

Continuing effects of human rights violations

While these human rights violations happened before these treaties entered into force, it is the case that states have the responsibility address violations if the event(s) have “continuing effects after the date of entry into force.” In the case of boarding schools, it is clear that Native communities continue to suffering devastating, continuing effects as result of these policies.

Some of these continuing effects, as they particularly pertain to health, include:

- * Increased physical, sexual and emotional violence in Native communities
- * Increased suicide rates
- * Increased substance abuse
- * Increased depression and post-traumatic stress disorder
- * Increased child and elder abuse

It is the responsibility of States, such as the U.S. government, to address these continuing effects. In reality, however, many States, such as the U.S., have decreased rather than increased services to address these issues. The U.S. in particular has not provided funding for programs that would specifically address the needs of Boarding school survivors and their offspring, and has been defunding Native-controlled anti-violence social service programmes because they are not considered “faith-based” (i.e. Christian) in terms of President Bush’s faith-based initiatives. Providing adequate funding for indigenous-controlled programs and services is not a privilege to be taken away by States in times of economic crises, it is a responsibility of States to address the social problems that they have in large part created through state policy, particularly boarding/residential school policies.

Organizations represented in this statement:

Boarding School Healing Project

Seventh Generation Fund

American Indian Law Alliance

Indigenous Women's Network

Tribal Law Policy Institute

Women of All Red Nations

First Nations North and South

Native Youth Action

South Dakota Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Center for Human Rights Education

Incite! Women of Color Against Violence

Hawai'i Institute for Human Rights

Indigenous Peoples Programme, World Council of Churches

Harvest of Nations

Na Koa Ikaika O Ka Lahui Hawaii