

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
Eleventh Session  
New York, 7th-18th May 2012

Item 3: Report on the expert group meeting: combating violence against indigenous women and girls, article 22 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Study on the extent of violence against indigenous women and girls in terms of article 22 (2) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Global Indigenous Youth Caucus

Thank you Mr. Chair,

On behalf of the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, we would like to extend our thanks and gratitude to all of our supporters in this room and welcome back our fellow youth.

Based on the Expert Group Meeting Report on Combating Violence against Indigenous women and girls, we recommend the following:

We affirm the language and analysis of structural violence as the root of violence against indigenous women and girls as stated in the EGM report, specifically recommendation 17.

We also affirm the capacity and ability of Indigenous youth to fully and effectively participate in all UN processes as their own experts on issues affecting us. Paternalistic and sexist attitudes and structures undermine this right. Solely characterizing Indigenous youth and young women as vulnerable and objects for study ignores the fact that we are agents of human rights and experts of knowledge within our communities. Regions must support the action that Indigenous youth are already taking, and efforts being made that respect our self-determination and agency as Indigenous peoples.

Therefore, we recommend that Indigenous youth be fully included and involved with the design, execution, implementation and assessment of programming, plans, and documents relevant to indigenous youth within all UN systems and governance structures. We demand that the time and knowledge of Indigenous youth be fully valued and taken seriously.

Due to the lack of Indigenous youth specific data we recommend the convening of an Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous children and youth, with specific focus and attention on the following issues: cultural identity and the connections to all issues facing Indigenous peoples including the participation of Indigenous youth in decision making processes.

We request the assurance that through this process, concrete mechanisms are established so that youth are involved in all areas of planning. Through these mechanisms should come free, prior and informed consent on the knowledge provided by the youth surrounding this concept. This includes the right to discontinue participation if the process does not respect Indigenous youth. Any program that excludes or ignores Indigenous youth, is at best ineffective and at worst violates our basic human rights as Indigenous peoples.

With regard to who is deemed an "expert" by the Permanent Forum and UN bodies, we also recommend that Indigenous youth, particularly young women, are viewed as experts on their lived experiences and treated as such. We recommend this participation extend not only to EGMs but to all information, reports and programming involving Indigenous youth within the UN system and relevant UN bodies.

Finally, we request that the Committee on the Convention Rights of the Child should be present at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and recommend the participation of the Special Rapporteur oversee this process. Particularly as there are ongoing concerns in many regions where the state policing, military and justice systems are utilizing sexual violence perpetrated against Indigenous young women and children for the purpose of controlling Indigenous peoples and attempted land theft.

Finally, we remind UNICEF of our recommendation at last year's Permanent Forum to create an Indigenous youth Fellowship, which is currently under development. We iterate the importance of this work and look forward to further programs that highlight the strength and knowledge of Indigenous young women.

It cannot be said enough the importance of direct involvement of Indigenous youth, not symbolic mentions of youth as the future without action. We are HERE, We are the Present and we are the continuations of our peoples.