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**Structural
Analysis of
Cultural
Systems**

United Nations
Human Rights Council
Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Fourth session

Geneva, 11-15 July 2011

Statement on Item 4

Identifying obstacles to indigenous peoples' participation in decision-making

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Firstly, I would like to take the opportunity to compliment you on your election, and I also congratulate the Expert Mechanism on the *Final study on indigenous peoples and the right to participate in decision-making* (A/HRC/EMRIP/2011/2). It is very helpful that in this study, as well as in last year's *Progress report* (A/HRC/EMRIP/2011/2), a number of obstacles have been identified that impede indigenous peoples' participation in decision making. In doing so, however, EMRIP focuses on political, legal and administrative aspects, whereas social and psychological mechanisms are only touched briefly and very generally. Yet, the entire issue of the report and the study pertains to human intergroup behaviour, which means that there are social and psychological mechanisms at the core of the problems. As, e.g., you identify "the influence of contemporary structures" (Progress report, para. 48), as factors that destabilise indigenous systems, you are addressing an issue that is crucial not only to indigenous peoples' participation in decision making, but even to the further existence of indigenous peoples. Confining the considerations to political, legal and administrative aspects is not only alien to indigenous perspectives; it also involves the risk to forfeit the chance of identifying, analysing, understanding and counteracting these social and psychological mechanisms of human intergroup behaviour. As indigenous peoples are exposed to intercultural dominance, not only the threat of, but the reality of their disintegration is progressing. Facing these adverse factors is a necessary precondition for taking effective measures to ensure indigenous peoples' participation in decision making on a truly equitable level.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman