



Agenda Item # 5

Statement by Oleg Egorov,
The First Session of the UN Permanent Forum
On Indigenous Issues
May 16, 2002

Dear brothers and sisters,
Dear friends,
Dear colleagues,

Let us take a look at what is the "key" word in the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues.

The key word is SECURITY.

The very idea of the UN is security of all nations, for all peoples. It says so in the UN Charter. It affects every step the UN takes, it underscores every decision the UN makes. And in that need for security all are equal. The United States of America and Keto - a tiny indigenous nation of 900 people in the heart of Siberia - may express that need differently but the need is the same, nevertheless.

The ECOSOC itself is all about security.

Economic development is to develop and secure means to continue to exist and prosper. Such development prevents conflicts. That is security.

The social development provides tools and mechanisms for any society to distribute and control the results of the economic development in an equitable, beneficial bases for all. That is security.

It has been said by many previous speakers that the economic and social development, the environment, education, health and even human rights are all inseparable parts of our cultures. I second that.

Culture is a profound understanding and knowledge of WHY and HOW we are here, each separately and all together. Culture is the way we receive this knowledge from our Elders. Culture is sharing that knowledge and understanding among us, making it known to the world and passing it on to the future generations. And that represents the highest form of our common security.

Therefore, we propose for the Permanent Forum to think of a mechanism that will allow councils of elders and other traditional indigenous leaderships to be an effective, practical, and NOT only symbolic, part of the Permanent Forum.

It is not easy, but only by achieving it we will be able to achieve security.

We also propose that the Permanent Forum encourage creation of regional mechanisms and structures, built from the grassroots up, that will enable the rise of INDIPENDENT indigenous youth organisations and connect them to the Permanent Forum.

Without it our common future will never be secure.

Dear brothers and sisters, dear friends, dear colleagues, allow me to conclude by once again stressing the obvious - security is equally important for a Masai family or an Onondaga, as it is for the UN family.

And for the first time in history we have a chance to develop a truly effective mechanism to provide security for all. Maybe not tomorrow; maybe not in a hundred years. But we have to just keep on trying.

Let us do not miss this chance to give a secure future for our peoples.

Let us work towards that goal together.

Thank you for your kind time and attention.