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**TENTH SESSION OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES  
May 16 to 27, 2011 – UN Headquarters, New York City, NY**

**STATEMENT OF THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' CAUCUS**

**Agenda Item 8: Future Work of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

**Subject: Doctrine of Discovery as the special theme for the 11th session in 2012**

**Presented by: Christopher H. Peters, 7<sup>th</sup> Generation Fund, President**

1. Thank you Madam Chair for the opportunity to speak today. I am honored to address this distinguished body of experts on this agenda item. The Indigenous Peoples of the North America region express our sincere appreciation for the decision made by members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to advance the critical topic of the *Doctrine of Discovery* as the special theme of the 11th session of the Forum.

2. The historic edict of Christendom proclaimed by Pope Alexander the 6th nearly 520 years ago, known around the world as the Papal Bulls of 1493, has caused far-reaching and devastatingly negative impacts on the lives, cultures, and ecosystems of Indigenous Peoples throughout the world.

3. The Doctrine of Discovery as the theme for the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Permanent Forum will provide an opportunity to redress the social, political and legal constructs that have resulted from the Papal Bulls and the accompanying edict of *Terra Nullus*. Both of which have perpetuated the ongoing genocide, colonization, and domination of Indigenous Peoples and our homelands. We recognize that it will provide the mechanism for Indigenous Peoples and governments to begin the laborious task of repudiating and deconstructing this vicious framework of colonization within our Nations and communities.

4. We commend the Expert Members of the Permanent Forum for their courage and vision in forwarding this important issues at this time when the world searches for a new ecologically centered paradigm and for a moral and socially conscious process for transforming and protecting the dignity and equality for all citizens of the world community.

5. Madam Chair, on March 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Indigenous Peoples and organizations from North America gathered at Blue Lake, California to discuss a number of urgent concerns and propose recommendations for the future work of the Permanent Forum. We were mindful of the Forum's Final Report on UNPFII-9, (E/2010/43-E/C.19/2010/15) of May 19, 2010, and its acknowledgement of the *Preliminary Study of the Impact on Indigenous Peoples of the International Legal Construct Known as the Doctrine of Discovery*, E/C.19/2010/13, (4 February 2010), by Special Rapporteur, Tonya Gonnella Frichner, the North American Indigenous Peoples' Caucus, and in that regard, offer the following recommendations:

Recommendations:

6. We reiterate a call for additional attention, study and documentation of the racist and genocidal doctrine of Christian discovery;

7. Advance our appeal for a deep exploration of the manner in which the doctrine of Christian discovery has been constructed, elaborated, applied, and extended in law, policy, socio-cultural practices, through both secular and religious practices, and to set the stage for its eradication and reversal as a fundamental element of colonialism and imperialism, with full and equal participation by Indigenous Peoples;

8. Request that the following recommendation of the Special Rapporteur be acted upon:

- This study shall be expanded to include a global review of this doctrine and call upon the other Indigenous caucuses to discuss and prepare studies documenting the impacts in their regions.
- That an international expert group meeting be convened to discuss the findings and implications of the preliminary study of the Doctrine of Discovery, and to present its findings to the next UNPFII session (2012) and to ascertain to what extent and how the Doctrine of Discovery and its attendant framework of domination are applied to Indigenous Peoples, and our lands and territories, throughout the world.

9. Call on this Forum (UNPFII-10) to take into consideration the recommendations of the *Regional Hearing on the Impact of the Doctrine of Discovery on Indigenous Peoples*, held on March 14, 2011 in Pueblo Grande, Phoenix and the upcoming hearings in Mexico and India, in preparation and to help shape the agenda for next year's theme.

10. Finally Madam Chair, we implore that the future work of this distinguished body examines the legacy the Doctrine of Discovery, and that it remains mindful of the current and continued impacts on the sovereign and human rights of Indigenous Peoples of the world.

11. The pernicious edicts of the Doctrine of Discovery of 520 years ago are directly responsible for and connected to current policies that perpetrate treaty violations, destructions of sacred places, loss of lands, cultures and languages. It is also directly responsible for the disproportionate levels of incarceration, the violent assaults committed upon our children in boarding and residential schools and the devastating trauma experienced by our families, communities and Nations.

12. Without prejudice to the work and recommendations on Doctrine of Discovery, we support the call for a proposal for the creation of a Doctrine of Reconciliation. We further support the call for an Expert Group Seminar on Truth and Reconciliation Commissions as

proposed by the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in its 3<sup>rd</sup> Report to be hosted by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Madame Pillay.

*Wok lau*