

**Statement by Expert Member Dr. Wilton Littlechild, I.P.C.,  
Twelfth Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 20-31 May 2013  
Agenda Item 6: Discussion on the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples  
28 May 2013**

On behalf of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, I welcome the discussion here today on the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples as we lead into the preparatory meeting taking place in June in Alta, Norway. Our upcoming 6<sup>th</sup> Session will be the first opportunity to consider further the proposed Alta Declaration. In that regard, I would like to refer to the proposal of the Expert Mechanism contained in our 5<sup>th</sup> Session which states as follows:

**"Proposal 3: World Conference on Indigenous Peoples**

The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

(a) Refers to resolution 65/198 of the General Assembly, wherein the General Assembly decided to organize a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly in 2014, to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, to share perspectives and best practices on the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples, including the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

Since the first session of the Expert Mechanism, we have tried to identify best practices in our studies based on the UN *Declaration* and its implementation.

The Expert Mechanism's 3<sup>rd</sup> proposal continues:

"(b) Proposes that the Human Rights Council welcome the recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues from its eleventh session relating to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples<sup>1</sup> and encourage the development of an action-oriented outcome document at the World Conference;

(c) Proposes that the Human Rights Council support the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples at all preparatory and follow-up stages of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, as well as during the World Conference itself. Indigenous peoples must also be equal participants in the drafting of the outcome documents and in the co-chairing of all World Conference meetings."

We congratulate the UN Permanent Forum, states and others for their support of the Indigenous Global Coordinating Group who have worked so hard to ensure all regions are involved.

Again, I refer to the Expert Mechanism's 3<sup>rd</sup> proposal:

"(d) Proposes that the Human Rights Council encourage the participation of national human rights institutions in all the preparatory and follow-up processes of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples as well as at the World Conference

itself;

(e) Proposes that the Human Rights Council recommend that the themes, agenda items, duration, location and timing of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples be determined by consultations with indigenous peoples and States and in a manner that will best facilitate the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples.”

As you know, during its 24<sup>th</sup> session this fall, the Human Rights Council will have an interactive dialogue on the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

In the Expert Mechanism’s 3<sup>rd</sup> proposal, it:

“(f) Proposes that the Human Rights Council recommend that the studies and advice of the Expert Mechanism be discussed at, and incorporated into the agendas of, the preparatory and follow-up meetings, as well as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.”

We re-state this call as our studies, reports and Advice No. 1 to No. 5 support the proposed thematic roundtables and the interactive dialogue in the draft Alta Declaration. I note with some concern, however, the exclusion of any reference to Indigenous spirituality and the distinctive spiritual relationship of Indigenous peoples to lands, territories and resources, as recognized by, among others, article 25 of the *UN Declaration*. We would also recall articles 43 and 45 of the *UN Declaration*. WCIP is an opportunity to build on the fundamental and minimum standards, acknowledging the great strengths of Indigenous peoples.

Finally, in the Expert Mechanism’s 3<sup>rd</sup> proposal, it:

“(g) Proposes that the Human Rights Council encourage States and all United Nations agencies to support the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, especially through technical and financial contributions.”

Let me reiterate our thanks to all involved in the preparations, and in particular, to the Indigenous Global Coordination Group and the two Co-Facilitators, Mr. John Henriksen and Ambassador De Alba.

This proposal underscores the fundamental importance of continued full and equal participation of Indigenous peoples at all stages of the World Conference, and I call on all participants – State representatives, representatives of Indigenous peoples, United Nations agencies and bodies and all others – to take concerted efforts, in partnership, to ensure this is accomplished. This includes the continuation of two Co-Facilitators, one representing Indigenous peoples and one representing states.

The Expert Mechanism looks forward to working closely with the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in this effort, along with all delegations. At the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, it is important that the Expert Mechanism receives the opportunity to fully participate in the World Conference, including designation as an official delegate and inclusion of its

Further, one area of reform to be advanced at the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples is the full and effective participation in decision-making of Indigenous peoples on an equal basis throughout the United Nations system. Indeed, the Secretary-General has reviewed this issue recently. We would also urge consideration for the establishment and naming of an envoy and an Under-Secretary-General. Recognition of, and the inclusion of, Indigenous peoples in UN processes could mark an important advancement of the recognition and promotion of the rights of Indigenous peoples, consistent with article 3, *inter alia*, of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. This should be pursued as an important outcome of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

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5/20/18