

TANSI. MR. CHAIRPERSON, MEMBERS OF THE PERMANENT FORUM, REPRESENTATIVES OF MEMBERS STATES AND UN AGENCIES, BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

MY NAME IS GERALD MORIN, AND I AM SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF THE METIS NATIONAL COUNCIL.(MNC) THE MNC REPRESENTS THE METIS NATION IN CANADA. I AM THE PRESIDENT OF THE MNC.

I FIRST WISH TO THANK THE HOUDONESHONE AND OTHER INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND NATIONS FOR THE WARM HOSPITALITY AND SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE.

ALLOW ME TO BEGIN BY CONGRATULATING THE MEMBERS OF THE PERMENANT FORUM ON THEIR APPONTMENTS AND ELECTIONS, AND TO CONGRATULATE THE CHAIRMAN, THE VICE-CHAIRS AND THE RAPPORTEUR ON THEIR APPOINTMENTS.

I SHOULD EXPLAIN THAT THE METIS NATION IS A SMALL INDIGENOUS NATION IN CANADA. ALTHOUGH WE RECENTLY ACQUIRED EXPRESS CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION AS ONE OF THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES OF CANADA WHOSE RIGHTS ARE PROTECTED FROM GOVERNMENTAL ACTION, OUR RIGHTS CONTINUE TO BE IGNORED BY THE GOVERNMENT. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN DIFFICULT FOR US TO GET PROPER RECOGNITION, EVER SINCE OUR POLITICAL LEADER, LOUIS RIEL, WAS HANGED FOR TREASON IN THE LAST MILITARY ENCOUNTER THAT OUR ANCESTORS HAD AGAINST THE CANADIANS WHO INTRUDED INTO OUR HOMELAND IN THE WEST.

BUT I AM NOT HERE TODAY TO COMPLAIN ABOUT CANADA AND ITS ABORIGINAL POLICY, BUT RATHER

TO EXPRESS, IN THE MOST FAVOURABLE AND EMPHATIC TERMS, OUR SUPPORT FOR THE PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

I AGREE MOST ENTHUSIASTICALLY WITH THE DESCRIPTION OF MADAM DAES, WHO SAID AT THE OPENING STATEMENTS THAT THE PERMANENT FORUM SIGNIFIES A SHIFT FROM TALK TO ACTION IN THE SPHERE OF UNITED NATIONS INVOLVEMENT IN INDIGENOUS ISSUES. THE PERMANENT FORUM HAS A UNIQUE ROLE TO PERFORM. IT HAS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY THAT MUST BE SEIZED FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL OUR INDIGENOUS BROTHERS AND SISTERS AROUND THE EARTH. THE PERMANENT FORUM HAS AN OPERATIONAL MANDATE, TO COORDINATE AND EVALUATE THE TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES TO GOVERNMENTS AND TO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES.

THIS UNIQUE ROLE COMPLEMENTS THE WORK OF THE TWO WORKING GROUPS AND THAT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR, WHO ARE PROPERLY CONCERNED WITH DEBATES ON RIGHTS AND WITH COMPLAINTS AGAINST SPECIFIC MEMBER STATES. ONE OF THE ISSUES THE PERMANENT FORUM MIGHT CONSIDER IS THE ROLE OF ITS MEMBERS IN ATTENDING THE MEETINGS OF THESE AND OTHER BODIES WHICH CONCERN THEMSELVES WITH DEBATES ON INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND POLICY.

WE SUPPORT YOU IN THE DAUNTING CHALLENGES THAT YOU NOW FACE. WE EXPECT THAT YOU WILL BE FACED WITH A VERITABLE BLIZZARD OF ISSUES ALL BEGGING FOR YOUR ATTENTION. IN MAKING UP YOUR MINDS ABOUT PERFORMING YOUR MANDATE, WE

PROPOSE THAT YOU MIGHT FOCUS ON TRYING TO MAKE EFFECTIVE CHANGES WHERE THEY CAN BE MADE, AND PERHAPS SELECTING A SMALL NUMBER OF COUNTRIES AT LEAST AT THE BEGINNING, TO ALLOW EXPERIENCE AND BUDGETS TO INCREASE WITH TIME.

WE CAN NOT EMPHASIZE ENOUGH THE NEED FOR AN EFFECTIVE, INDIGENOUS STAFFED SECRETARIAT IN NEW YORK, WHERE THE PRACTICAL MANDATE OF THE PERMANENT FORUM CAN MOST EFFECTIVELY BE CARRIED OUT. MR BELCOURT, IN HIS PRESENTATION TUESDAY, ENCOURAGED CONTRIBUTIONS TO ESTABLISH THE SECRETARIAT, AND WE TRUST THAT INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS WILL FOLLOW SUIT.

YOU MUST PROVIDE YOURSELVES WITH AN OPERATIONAL CAPACITY IN THE VERY SHORT TERM, AND WE ARE HAPPY TO SUPPORT YOU ANY WAY THAT WE CAN IN DOING SO. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT AN INTER-SESSIONAL CAPACITY IS NEEDED. PERHAPS THE VICE-CHAIRS COULD CARRY ON THE IMPORTANT WORK OF THE FORUM BETWEEN SESSIONS, INCLUDING HOLDING MEETINGS WITH GOVERNMENTS AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATIVES.

IN CONCLUSION, THE METIS NATIONAL COUNCIL OFFERS YOU ITS HUMBLE CONGRATULATIONS AND WARMEST EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT AS YOU FACE A FUTURE THAT IS FILLED WITH PROMISE.

MARSI.