

My name is Germaine Omish-Guachena.... My statement is offered on behalf of my Tribal Coalition, the Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition and all members of the Alliance of Tribal Coalitions to End Violence.

Violence against women and girls is a pervasive violation of human rights and a form of discrimination that persists in every country. Even more dire is the situation of multiple and simultaneous layers of discrimination and violence and murder that is being perpetrated against indigenous women not only because they are women, but also because they are indigenous.

Collectively, as Tribal Coalitions who operate at the grass roots level we have seen first hand the atrocities that exist against our Indigenous women and girls. Despite steps forward by the United States, American Indian and particularly Alaska Native women continue to endure some of the highest and most disproportionate rates of domestic and sexual violence in the United States. American Indian and Alaska Native women are two-and-a-half times more likely to be assaulted than other women in the United States. One in three will be raped in her lifetime and, in some communities, the murder rate for American Indian and Alaska Native women is ten times the national average. Keep in mind that these statistics are based on the crimes that have been reported---many more crimes go unreported.

No more will we let our Indigenous women be beaten, raped, murdered or made to disappear and never be seen again. We acknowledge that elsewhere in the world our indigenous sisters face a common crisis: sky high rates of violence and sexual assault, and a legal system that fails to protect them. We understand that many human rights treaties and declarations set out crucial protections for women. Significantly, Article 22 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples calls on states, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to take measures to protect indigenous women against all forms of violence and discrimination.

As such, we believe that firm, concrete actions by the UN, coupled with implementation by states at the national and local level in conjunction with indigenous peoples, are absolutely critical if safety and freedom from discrimination and violence are ever to be restored to the American Indian and Alaska Native Indigenous women and to our Indigenous sisters worldwide. Toward that end, at least 18 Indigenous Tribal Coalitions that represent the majority of the Tribes across the United States and Alaska have joined us in urging the UN to support strong actions at this World Conference — actions intended to recognize the UN as lead in this urgent effort to end the epidemic of violence against Indigenous women. Consistent with the rights of Indigenous women affirmed in the Declaration, we have recommended actions such as: (i) convening a high-level conference to examine challenges to the safety of indigenous women and children; (ii) requiring that a UN body for implementing the Declaration give this issue particular attention; and (iii) appointing a Special Rapporteur to focus on the human rights issues of indigenous women and children.

We, the Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition and the Alliance of Tribal Coalitions to End Violence commend the efforts of states and indigenous peoples in working to negotiate a strong, action-oriented outcome document for this World Conference. It will take dedicated, expert attention within the UN and serious legal reforms at the national and local level to craft lasting solutions that will restore safety to indigenous women.