

Indigenous World Association – UN/ECOSOC

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UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
July 9-13, 2012,
United Nations, Geneva
Agenda Item 3: World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

Presented by Kenneth Deer, Indigenous World Association

Mr. Chairman,

The Indigenous World Association and the International Indian Treaty Council are looking forward to a new era in the United Nations with the announcement of a World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

This is the first time that the UN is having a world conference about **Peoples**. It is vastly different than a world conference about thematic issues like racism, climate change or human rights. It is world conference about **Peoples** with a right to self-determination.

The United Nations Charter begins with these words “We the **Peoples** of the United Nations”, and it further states ‘to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of **peoples**, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;”

Article 55 states “With a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of **peoples**, the United Nations shall promote:

1. Higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development;
2. Solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; and international cultural and educational cooperation; and
3. Universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.

Indigenous **Peoples** have been denied these rights as **Peoples** and the UN now has an opportunity to correct past injustices and create a new future for Indigenous **Peoples**.

We appeal to the member states of the United Nations to live up to the essential and fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which include respect for equal rights and self-determination of **Peoples**.

As well, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous **Peoples** which further affirmed that Indigenous **Peoples** are **Peoples** in international law.

It is time for the UN to represent all members of the human family. It must look beyond its narrow self-interest and acknowledge that states do not adequately represent Indigenous **Peoples**—

especially when Indigenous **Peoples'** rights are at stake. Indigenous **Peoples** must represent themselves.

The UN should return to the idealism that once made the UN a beacon of enlightenment and hope for a war weary world.

The UN should not be saddled by defining consensus as agreeing to the lowest common denominator. It must look upward and lead humanity to the highest standard possible. It cannot continue to be mired in old colonial thinking and outmoded concepts like the Doctrine of Discovery and racial superiority.

The World Conference on Indigenous **Peoples** gives the United Nations a grand opportunity to take a leap forward, to be more than the sum of its parts and to embrace Indigenous **Peoples** as equals in a manner that respects their rights and preserves world peace.

The United Nations should also do more than just open its doors but also open its minds and share this forum with **Peoples** who have been denied equality and dignity for far too long.

The rules and customs of the United Nations need to change to admit a segment of humankind that deserves to be represented and to participate in decisions that affect them.

Mr. Chairman, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should urge that member states of the United Nations allow the full and effective participation of Indigenous **Peoples**. In a World Conference on Indigenous **Peoples**, our participation must be equal to states.

We recommend that the Expert Mechanism:

Support the recommendations of the Indigenous Global Coordinating Group and the very similar recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

With the exception that the Expert Mechanism support the length of the WCIP to be at least three days long to assure that our issues are adequately discussed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman