

Rodion Sulyandziga

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RAIPON (Russian Association of Indigenous People of the North, Siberia and Far East)

Agenda Item 5



Dear Chairperson, Dear Members of the Permanent Forum, Brothers and Sisters,

Decades of waiting, difficult negotiations, challenging struggle for land and ethnic survival preceded this historic event, which gathered Indigenous Peoples, states, UN agencies for the First Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

My name is Rodion Sulyandziga and I am speaking on behalf of the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East (RAIPON), an umbrella organization that represents interests of forty Indigenous Peoples of Russia, who populate vast territories of Arctica, Siberia and Far East. Our delegation participates in this session for the first time, and I would like, on behalf of our delegation, to congratulate you, Mr. Chairperson, with the election to this post. I would like to congratulate all participants with the start of our work and hope for constructive dialog during these next two weeks. During the two weeks of intense work we have to develop common strategy and plan the future work of the Permanent Forum, lay the foundation for our success, determine the place, role, and function of the Permanent Forum within the UN system. Undoubtedly, the UN mandate covers all the problems faced by the Indigenous Peoples all over the world: the right for self-determination, land and natural resources, environment, health, education, social and economic development. However, the role of the Permanent Forum should differ from that of the Working Group on Indigenous Issues.

It is the opinion of our delegation that the work of the Permanent Forum should focus on the following:

- The Permanent Forum should serve as the Information Depository, where all information and documentation on Indigenous Issues will be collected from various UN agencies, international conferences and declarations, Indigenous Peoples and their organizations. This information should be further disseminated among Indigenous Peoples and states.
- The Permanent Forum should serve as the Analytical Center, where all information is analyzed in order to develop recommendations, strategies and directions for the UN work on Indigenous Issues.
- The Permanent Forum should serve as the Coordinating Body for the various UN programs and agencies (ILO, UNDP, WIPO, etc.), aimed to support Indigenous Peoples in order to increase their efficiency, as well as to provide projects evaluation and monitoring.
- The Permanent Forum should be a kind of a UN Security Council on Indigenous Issues, and have the capability to efficiently respond to acute cases of violations of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and threats to their lives in different countries.
- The Permanent Forum should evaluate the International Decade of the Indigenous Peoples of the UN and organize, within a year, a special

international conference to develop recommendations for the UN for the next decade.

To prepare for this work, two critical issues should be addressed:

- To ensure adequate financing for the Permanent Forum during the entire period of its operation;
- To secure the establishment of a separate Secretariat.

Undoubtedly, all these issues should be thoroughly considered and discussed.

In my speech I should briefly address the issue of representation at the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues of the Post-Soviet countries and Russia, so that this issue is dealt with once and for all. In my open letter of December 27, 2001 to the President of ECOSOC and UNHCR, and in my further open appeal of January 10, 2002 to organizations of Indigenous Peoples and to the Members of the Permanent Forum, I expressed our deep concern that, when appointing the candidate, the opinion and the will of forty Indigenous Peoples representing Russia have been ignored. However, these peoples were one of the first to respond to the ECOSOC Resolution to establish open and comprehensive consultations, and they convened at their High Forum, the Congress of the Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Federation, where they elected their candidate on an alternative basis.

However, the ECOSOC has decided to appoint another candidate to this honorable position. This candidate nomination was based on many falsified documents. The Indigenous Peoples of Russia do not deserve such unfair treatment. Trust of the people cannot be gained by deception. We fully respect the ECOSOC decision and will abide by it, but this special case should serve as a warning for the future, so that the principles of honesty and openness encouraged by ECOSOC are not violated.

In conclusion, I would like to wish Dear Mr. Chairman and all Members of the Permanent Forum patience, flexibility and courage. Remember that you are the pioneers, and leading is always a challenge, but your mission is honorable and significant. In her speech the Deputy General Secretary stated that we should not expect miracles from the Permanent Forum. Miracles can be found only in fairy tales. But a small miracle has happened already on May 13th. The rest is up to us. The Indigenous Peoples of Russia will make every effort to contribute significantly to the work of the Permanent Forum.

Thank you for your attention.