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Seventh Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
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Agenda Item 5. Human rights: dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people and other special rapporteurs.

Statement by Indigenous Environmental Network, with support of Tonatierra.

Thank you Madame chair,

The REDOIL [Resisting Environmental Destruction On Indigenous Lands), an Alaska Native network of the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) consists of Alaska Natives of Inupiat, Yupik, Aleut, Tlingit, Gwich'in and Denaiana Athabascan Tribes in resistance to unsustainable fossil fuel development, and engaged in strategic action and organizing around oil development. Indigenous Peoples have experienced systematic and repeated violations of the oil, gas, mining and energy industries infringing on our inherent human rights to protect our traditional lands and protect our cultural livelihood and well being. Fossil fuel extraction and processing threatens Indigenous cultures, biodiversity, and destroys pristine ecosystems as well as perpetuating impacts of climate change within our traditional ancestral homelands.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Teshepuk Lake of the National Petroleum Reserve of Alaska and the Yukon Flats Wildlife Refuge are threatened. The Outer Continental Shelf of Alaska of almost its entire 83 million acres of offshore areas ranging from the Cook Inlet, Bristol Bay, Chukchi and Beaufort Seas are being targeted by petroleum corporations with support of the US government for exploration. Adding to these human rights issues, mining prospects throughout Alaska, such as the proposed Pebble and Donlin Creek mines, as well as the operating Red Dog, Kensington, and Pogo Mines disproportionately impact Indigenous homelands and our subsistence way of life. Current attempts to access the remaining lands that Alaska Natives rely on for subsistence needs are an example of ecocide, part of unjust United States energy and economic development policy, which is compounded and now felt globally through catastrophic effects of climate imbalance and warming of the North.

Alaska has been touted within climate change discussions in the national arena as the canary in the mine. Alaska Natives are severely impacted by climate change of which fossil fuel development is the leading contributing factor. Fossil fuel exploitation continues in the United States under the guise of "homeland security" and "energy independence" and yet the only lasting result is violations to our human rights, lands and territories, climate change, health and well being of our peoples.

Madam Chair, I would also like to bring international attention to the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Mikisew Cree and Athabasca Dene of northeastern Alberta, Canada. The Mikisew and Athabasca Dene are signatory to Treaty #8 and live in what has been characterized as the Canada's tar sands. These tar sands are

an industrial development that has been described as the largest industrial project in the world or "the most destructive project on Earth."

The Mikisew Cree and Athabasca Dene who live directly in the path of twenty oil companies are experiencing environmental justice issues of observed high levels of leukemia, lymphomas, lupus and auto-immune disorders. In worse cases they have observed very rare cancers. Cancers so rare that you would find in only 1:100,000 and should not find in a community of 1,200 residents which they share.

On a domestic level within Canada, the Mikisew Cree have requested a moratorium on any new applications for tar sands development. A call for a moratorium in February 2007 on any new approvals of tar sands expansion applications in support of the Mikisew Cree and Athabasca Dene has also been adopted by resolution by the Alberta Chiefs' Summit comprising of all 43 Chiefs in the province. It has become increasingly apparent that the government of Alberta and the federal government of Canada have no regard for the indigenous rights of Fort Chipewyan! The Mikisew Cree and Athabasca Dene seek support from the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for a call of a moratorium on any new approvals for tar sands applications.

The Mikisew Cree and the Athabasca Dene have the most at stake with continued approvals of tar sands projects. It is because of this tar sands development that Canada is not meeting its' United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Changes' Kyoto Protocol commitments. Canada must immediately meet its Kyoto Protocol commitments and halt all subsidies and end all support of the tar sands.

We as a human race are in crisis, and the time to act is now! We no longer can afford to "study" how we might adapt, or what sort of mitigation measures "may" be implemented to address this crisis, we must act now, and the fact is that the only real solution to address climate change is to eliminate the world dependence on fossil fuels. Catastrophic climate change will not abide unsustainable greed. There is an urgent need to implement a just transition toward clean renewable energy and an energy efficient economy, especially within our Indigenous territories.

Continued energy colonization within Indigenous homelands must cease now if we are to survive as Indigenous Peoples, but more so as humanity. The decisions that are made today by world leaders will effect the rights of the unborn and this responsibility cannot be taken lightly.

Therefore we make the following recommendation:

- 1) The Permanent Forum, through ECOSOC [Economic and Social Council] call on the UN General Assembly to convene an emergency world session to fully explore, with all branches of the UN, and relevant treaty bodies, in particular UNCERD, the multiple impacts of climate change and its link to fossil fuel development and the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, to include the topics of, but not limited to social, economic, cultural, environmental, health, food security, land and water rights, and treaty rights.