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**United Nation Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Seventh Session
New York, 21 April to 2 May, 2008**

AGENDA ITEM: 8(a) Ongoing priorities and themes – Indigenous children and youth

Joint Statement presented by Kathleen McHugh, Women's Council Chair, Assembly of First Nations on behalf of The Assembly of First Nations of Canada (representing 633 First Nations), the Assembly of First Nations Quebec and Labrador, First Nations Summit of British Columbia, Native Women's Association of Canada and Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations .

(Traditional greeting)

Mr. Chairman, Honourable Permanent Forum Members, distinguished delegates and Indigenous representatives. I am here today as a member of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Women's Council and, therefore, representing the Assembly of First Nations and the National Chief, Phil Fontaine. The role of the AFN Women's Council is to ensure that First Nation women's perspectives are included in all AFN policy directives and activities, and to ensure that the AFN is an effective advocate on behalf of First Nation's women. I want to acknowledge and pay my respects to the Onondaga Nation whose territory we are meeting on today.

I am pleased to advise the Permanent Forum's on the ongoing priorities and themes regarding Indigenous women, children and youth. This year the AFN Women's Council proposes that a *culturally relevant* Gender Balanced Analysis (GBA) be applied to the noted themes and makes the following 4 recommendations to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues:

1) The AFN Women's Council recommends to the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council that the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples conduct a thematic study on climate change. The study should adopt a rights-based approach consistent with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

Further, in light of article 44 of the Declaration, the UN should recommend that a *culturally relevant* Gender Balanced Analysis be applied in all stages of the study, including outcomes. This means the study should examine the impacts of climate change on Indigenous women, youth and children. In addition, the rights and role of Indigenous women, our traditional knowledge, our vital expertise and perspectives as Indigenous women; must be included in the study. Finally the corresponding obligations of States towards Indigenous women, youth and children must also be included. For Canada, this study should include the full and effective participation of First Nations women and adopt the AFN's *culturally relevant* GBA.

2) The AFN Women's Council calls upon the UNPFII7 to include in its final report a recommendation that governments support and promote budgeting considerations to gender, children and youth, in relation to environmental research, protection and advocacy. This will help restore gender balance to Indigenous systems and institutions, and ensure Indigenous women are active participants in balancing economic development

with the protection of Mother Earth and our responsibilities to future generations, which is our traditional role, and our right.

3) The AFN Women's Council calls upon the UNPFII7 to include in its final report that a *culturally relevant* GBA be applied to human resource development to ensure specific opportunities are created for Indigenous women, including Indigenous women with disabilities, regarding: economic planning, education and employment. A *culturally relevant* GBA should also be used to identify and remove any barriers preventing First Nations women from obtaining education and participating in the economy.

4) In the promotion of the United Nations development and section 44 of UN Declaration we recommend establishing partnerships with the AFN Women's Council and the UN Agencies to train Indigenous women leaders in the implementation of the UN Declaration.

The goal of our first two recommendations is to ensure that Indigenous women contribute to solutions to climate change through our specialized knowledge of ecological linkages and ecosystem management. Also we wish to ensure Indigenous women are equally protected from environmental impacts through inclusion in the advocacy to protect the environment and holistic health of our communities.

Our third and fourth recommendations speak to the issues of livelihood and sustainable environments. A principle theme of the UN Millennium Development Goals is global partnership for development. Our goal in these recommendations is to ensure that Indigenous women can be true partners by identifying and removing any barriers that prevent Indigenous women from accessing education, economic opportunities and leadership. We also note that, for Indigenous women there is a positive link between eliminating poverty and an ability to seek remedies for family violence.

The AFN Women's Council developed a culturally relevant GBA that was endorsed by Chief's in Assembly in May 2007. The AFN supports a gender balanced approach: one that is more culturally relevant than mainstream approaches. The norm of balancing roles instills value and respect for all members of society: men, boys, girls, elders, two-spirited and trans-gendered people. It allows for the balancing of collective rights with individual rights, of perspectives from communities as well as individuals.

The AFN has shared its GBA framework with federal departments and agencies in Canada and would like an opportunity to share it with UN agencies responsible for the promotion and empowerment of Indigenous women.