

# **Black Hills Teton Sioux Nation**

## **MEMBER RESERVATIONS**

Pine Ridge  
Lower Brule  
Cheyenne River  
Standing Rock  
Rosebud  
Fort Peck  
Crow Creek  
Santee  
Canadian Sioux

***Commission on Human Rights  
Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination &  
Protection of Minorities  
Working Group on Indigenous Populations  
Fourteenth Session  
29 July - 2 August, 1996***

***Intervention by: Tony Black Feather***

***Intervention date: August 2, 1996***

## **Item 6: Consideration of a Permanent Forum**

Madam Daes, thank you once again for your leadership. It is always a pleasure to see you here at the helm, leading us in the important work that we have to do. I appreciate this opportunity, as always, to present the views of our Lakota Nation and to affirm our commitment to the human rights foundation upon which the United Nations is based.

As you know, there is no disagreement that Indigenous peoples of the world need a Permanent Forum within the United Nations. As you yourself stated, a Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples is necessary to "ensure the operation of our goals after the completion of the decade." The words upon which the United Nations are founded, namely, "freedom, justice and peace in the world", represent the natural laws of the Creator according to our Lakota people. We believe that the Permanent Forum must also stand strongly and firmly for these principles. We would like to recommend some specific characteristics that our Permanent Forum should include.

First, the Permanent Forum should be endowed with some form of sanction or disciplinary power. In this way the violations of treaties and international law, abuses against culture, intellectual property and, in the most extreme situations, the taking of human life and the assaults on the environment that are endured by Indigenous people, will not only be given voice but acted upon. To ensure the effectiveness of this power it is therefore also imperative that the Permanent forum be established at the highest possible level of the United Nations. One aspect of this power may be the creation of a process for dispute resolution between Indigenous peoples and nation states which is supervised by the Permanent Forum.

Second, the Permanent Forum must be open to Indigenous, grass roots community peoples and nations irregardless of the opinions of the colonial powers attempting to exert illegal control on our territories. If the Permanent Forum is not open to all of our peoples, it cannot ensure that our future generations of Indian people will have a voice within this international body. The openness of the Working Group, under Madame Chairperson's leadership, is to be applauded.

As you yourself know, the voices of Indigenous peoples that are here in this forum are not always the voices of the Indigenous peoples recognized by the member nations. The government of the nation colonizing my own territory in South Dakota attempts to hide its own abuses by meeting with leaders that it has itself put into power. The Lakota leaders used by the government are from tribal councils, funded by the federal system illegally installed in 1934 in violation of our treaties. I make this statement so that the Chairperson and the Working Group will help to ensure that the voices of all Indigenous peoples may continue to be heard in the Permanent forum. To attempt to dictate in any way the participation in the permanent forum would give the greater power of one nation state the ability to dominate smaller, weaker Indigenous nations and control the forum in violation of natural law and the laws of the Creator.

Third, if the Permanent Forum is to be reflective of Indigenous nations, communities and cultures, it must not be limited in its mandate or purpose. For our Lakota people, when people meet in council, the people decide what to discuss and how to discuss it. To limit the Permanent Forum to certain topics or purposes would be to restrict our people. Since violations to human rights are not restricted, the forum in which we discuss and at upon abuses to human rights cannot be restricted either. The only way the Permanent Forum can be effective is to stand on human rights and again, in the words of the UN charter, to recognize the "inherent dignity and . . . the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family."

We urge the Working Group to join with us in ensuring that these principles be a part of the concept of the Permanent Forum. We can no longer honor a system that has not worked for our people for over 500 years now. If necessary, justice must be protected through the United Nations and the World Court. Sometimes you have to fight fire with fire. Thank you again for your attention.

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Black Feather  
Spokesman,  
Teton Sioux Nation Treaty Council