

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Eleventh Session

Opening Remarks - Doctrine of Discovery

United Nations Head-Quarters, New York

Tehe i wa mauri ora

Tena koutou mai Aotearoa, me nga iwi katoa o te moana nui a kiwa.

Naku te honore ki te huakina I tenei huihuinga. He kaupapa tenei tino nui mo tatou ko nga iwi taketake.

[Greetings from New Zealand, and the Pacific nations]

It is my pleasure to open this session addressing a very important doctrine in the history of our indigenous brothers and sisters – the doctrine of discovery

There has been extensive discussion on the Doctrine of Discovery, its historical development, past and present impacts, the different ways it has affected and continues to affect and impact on indigenous peoples, as well as the relationship between governments and indigenous peoples.

It is without question that the Doctrine of Discovery has had a detrimental effect on all indigenous peoples.

The implementation of this doctrine was used as an instrument to alienate indigenous peoples from their land, resources and culture and continues today in various forms.

During the tenth session, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) resolved to hold a panel discussion during its eleventh session

to discuss ways of developing a vision of the future for reconciliation, peace and justice.

This will include looking at methods of redefining indigenous and State relationships through Constitutional Transformations, Treaties, Agreements and other constructive arrangements as an equally important lens through which to understand the Doctrine of Discovery.

Discussion between Member States, UN system and indigenous peoples and other key players will serve to generate discussion on ways in which governments and indigenous peoples can work together to build a future on mutual respect, equity and justice.

With this in mind it is an honour to introduce our illustrious panel of experts:

Panelists:

- (1) Professor Robert Williams (USA)
- (2) Ms Tonya Gonella-Frichner (USA)
- (3) Ms Vicky Tauli-Corpuz (Asia)
- (4) Ms Maria Fernanda Espinosa (Minister – Government of Ecuador)
- (5) Mr Moana Jackson (Aotearoa/NZ)

Each panelist will briefly address one or more of the major issues of the effects of the Doctrine of Discovery and also identify ways of moving forward through exercising the autonomy and sovereignty of indigenous peoples'; provide a general overview of the Doctrine; history of the Doctrine, constructive agreements and treaties, policies, governance structures and the right to redress focusing on the challenges, good examples and policy recommendation for future action.

I now turn the floor to Professor Williams our first panelist.

Kia ora koutou,
Valmaine Toki