

Tetuwán Oyate

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Economic and Social Council
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues - First Session
New York, May 13-24, 2002 - The United Nations

Intervention by Tony Black Feather
Item 5

Greetings to the honored members of the Permanent Forum and all our relatives here today. We are the Tetuwán Oyate, Lakota Nation. I am Tony Black Feather, the Spokesman for our traditional nation in international forums.

We are proud and encouraged by the spirit of goodwill that was expressed in the historic opening of the Permanent Forum yesterday. We have confidence that after many years of hard work the Permanent Forum will begin to put words into action. With prayer, the actions of the Permanent Forum will benefit of all our peoples.

The Lakota Nation stands on Natural Law, which is the law given to us by the Creator to live in harmony and peace in our territories. Our way of life respects this law and is something that not only assures our survival but the survival of the family of nations.

The United Nations has developed methods in which our laws can be applied. This is why our leaders have sent us to international forums. We have distributed to the delegates and members a position paper on international law and how it protects our lands and territories under legally binding treaties.

Our recommendations to the Permanent Forum are to ensure that the United Nations takes steps toward the implementation of both the international laws and Natural Laws. We would suggest that:

1. The studies of the Special Rapporteurs, especially the Study on Treaties by Professor Martinez, be utilized as a guide for making recommendations on the enforcement of treaty rights for Indigenous nations. The Tetuwán Oyate also encourages the Permanent Forum to recommend that international bodies, including the International Court of Justice, be consulted for the preservation of treaty rights.
2. That the Studies on Land and Culture by Madam Daes be used to guide the Forum's recommendations on Indigenous peoples' sovereignty.
3. That the Permanent Forum, in order to fulfill its mandate, be provided with a permanent Secretariat.

Land and treaty rights are the key to our survival. Without our territories we cannot live. As many people stated yesterday, the survival of Indigenous peoples is also the survival of Mother Earth.

Thank you. All my relations. Wopila. Mitaku Oyasín.

Tony Black Feather, Spokesman, PO Box 48, Pine Ridge, SD 57770, 308-862-2607
Kent Lebsack, American Indian Law Alliance, 4448 Jupiter St. NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107
505-341-4230, 505-344-8366 fax, klebsack@comcast.net
for more information visit our website at www.americanindianlawall.org
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