

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Twelfth Session, May 20th -31st, 2013

**Global Indigenous Women's Caucus Statement by Mayra Gomez
Agenda Item 3(c) Culture**

Honorable Chairperson, Members of the Permanent Forum, Sisters and Brothers,

We, the Global Indigenous Women's Caucus (GIWC), understand the importance of culture within Indigenous communities and also recognize the critical need to preserve and perpetuate our culture, including the access needed to practice our traditional knowledge, spiritual ceremonies, and Indigenous languages, as well as access to our sacred sites and the ability to protect the natural resources that are essential to Indigenous peoples well being. As Indigenous Mothers and caretakers of our youth, we recognize that Indigenous children have the right to access and should have the opportunity to be raised with their cultures, languages and communities. The International and state borders that run through our territories disrupt access to our cultures. The continuation of cultural assimilation is endangering Indigenous Peoples culture and must be addressed. We recognize the role indigenous women have as custodians of our culture and carry the responsibility to preserve and protect our culture for our youth and future generations.

The Global Indigenous Women's Caucus adopted the following recommendations at the May 17, 2013 GIWC meeting:

1. The GIWC reiterates the Permanent Forums recommendations in paragraph 34 of the 3rd session that UNESCO explore the links between the protection of tangible cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage and sacred sites and other related UNESCO instruments with a view to broadening, strengthening and streamlining the protection of (indigenous) cultural heritage, as provided in Articles 11, 12, 25 of UNDRIP; and that UNESCO facilitate the participation of both the Forum and indigenous peoples' representatives in all relevant meetings of interest to them; Noting that the current UNESCO endangered languages programme seeks only to record endangered (indigenous) languages, that UNESCO expand its endangered languages programme to record, revive and reintroduce indigenous languages, in cooperation with indigenous peoples. This should include projects that support training in and teaching of indigenous languages at the community level. An example of implementation of this recommendation would be for the Permanent Forum to encourage all member states sign on to the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention.
2. The GIWC recalls the Permanent Forums comments in the final report of the 11th session on the ongoing manifestations of the Doctrine of Discovery in indigenous communities in the area of culture. We recommend that the Permanent Forum appoint the representative Ed John as special rapporteur for an international study on the Doctrine of Discovery.

3. We welcome the Permanent Forums recommendation made in paragraph 35 of the 3rd session that UNESCO, other cultural institutions and academic institutions Recognize and document the diversity of gender relations in indigenous communities based on active community input and participation; Examine and document women's spheres of power in indigenous societies, taking into account traditional mechanisms of gender definition and distinction; Examine and document the instrumental role of women in indigenous societies as the custodians of sacred knowledge and power, and as medical specialists; Highlight and give recognition to women's instrumental roles in indigenous societies as educators, healers and ritual specialists; Highlight indigenous women's traditional skills, arts and crafts and publicize them through the media, cultural institutions etc.
4. Recalling paragraph 57 of session 3, reaffirming the Permanent Forums recommendation that Governments integrate a gender framework that encompasses all areas of their work, including their agricultural and economic policies, and include in their policies actions that directly benefit indigenous women, through the following measures: (a) Provide access for Indigenous women to funding from public budgets; (b) Create specific measures that enhance women's participation in their own development processes; (c) Create national policies that generate employment for indigenous women; (d) improve indigenous women's access to education and the development of their skills, and reform education systems so that they allow women to take advantage of training and employment opportunities; (e) strengthen programmes in indigenous communities that ensure benefits for indigenous women.

In conclusion, we thank you for your consideration of full implementation of these recommendations, as culture is substantive in our role as Indigenous women and caretakers of our youth, families and future generations.