

**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Tenth Session - New York
16-27 May 2011**

Agenda Item 3(a): Economic and Social Development

JOINT INTERVENTION DELIVERED BY Hannah Donnelly ON BEHALF OF:

National Native Title Council
Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action
Aboriginal Legal Service Western Australia
Amnesty International Australia
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations
National Indigenous Higher Education Network
Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
Indigenous Youth Delegation of Australia
Gugu Badhun Ltd
Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement
Indigenous Community Volunteers
Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory
New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council
Aboriginal Medical Service Western Sydney
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal and Advocacy Service
Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

Madam/Mister Chairperson

The Indigenous Peoples Organisations (IPO) Network of Australia reiterates the need for the Permanent Forum to remain vigilant in its efforts to implement the recommendations made in relation to economic and social development. Particularly those that include developed frameworks such as the Programme of Action for the Second Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples, the Millennium Development Goals, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Declaration) and International Labour Organization Convention 169 (ILO169).

The end goal should be to achieve parity with the mainstream economic and social development experience. In designing strategies to achieve this parity, the limiting nature of the mainstream ideology and its effects on Indigenous peoples' capacity to engage and leverage development opportunities needs to be taken into account.

Therefore, we also reinforce the need for the UN system and States to financially support the efforts of Indigenous peoples in consolidating their own development models, concepts and practices. Programs such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have provided necessary expertise and support for Indigenous peoples to leverage and benefit directly from economic and social development opportunities, although not all Indigenous peoples have access to programs such as this.

Economic and social development strategies must be reinforced by principles and programs that promote sustainability; should be underpinned by strengths-based approaches to achieving a reduction in poverty and overcoming disadvantage; and

must be considered in the context of the quadruple bottom line. Strategies must include and balance community priorities across all elements of economic, social, cultural, and environmental development. States need to understand and accept that economic and social development does not necessarily mean profit as an outcome and in some instances, outcomes will be in form of sustainability; community cultural development or entrepreneurial activity.

The Australian Government has recently commenced a process to design an Indigenous Economic Development Strategy. Strategies such as these must be developed in accordance with the Declaration, particularly, our right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising our right to development. They must also be developed with the active participation of Indigenous peoples; with appropriate support by States; and without Indigenous peoples having to relocate from their communities.

While Indigenous peoples have varying degrees of access and control of up to 20 percent of the Australian continent, much of which is rich in natural resources, we are also the most disadvantaged group in Australia by all social indicators. The majority of the assets of Indigenous peoples in Australia remain owned or under the control of the State. As a result the State retains control of our economic and social development and as such they define, with or without our input, where and how development occurs. This control is further supported by policies where government requires security of tenure through long-term leases over our land in order for them to provide funding for infrastructure, housing, and other community development programs.

There is an urgent need to move beyond models where States continue to control the lives of Indigenous peoples, to models that promote our right to determine and develop our economic and social development priorities, and to have them administered by our own institutions.

Strategies focused particularly on business development should include opportunities within the mainstream business environment as well as those focused on community cultural development. For example, expanding Indigenous business to include renewable energy; cultural and environmental tourism; caring for country; the contribution of Indigenous knowledges to climate change strategies and emerging opportunities such as carbon markets.

We remain concerned, that there has been an overall failure of government policies, strategies and programs across the areas of education, employment and training. As such, opportunities for economic and social development are often not feasible for Indigenous peoples. Skill development and job-readiness are of particular concern and strategies often do not take these deficits into account. Capacity building of individuals and communities is a crucial requirement in increasing Indigenous peoples' ability to access social and economic development opportunities.

Recommendations:

We recommend that the Permanent Forum:

1. Urge all States to use the Declaration as the framework to guide the development of economic and social development strategies.

2. Urge all States to provide financial and technical assistance to Indigenous peoples and organisations to assist them to fully realise their social, cultural and economic development aspirations in accordance with article 39 of the Declaration.
3. Urge all States to consult and cooperate, effectively, in good faith with affected Indigenous Peoples, through their own representative institutions, in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing any development strategies in accordance with article 19 of the Declaration.
4. Urge all States to work with Indigenous peoples, their representatives, and other organisations to identify and develop capacity building opportunities at all levels, with particular consideration given to skill development and adequate resourcing.
5. Urge States to review laws, policies and programs that affect our lands, territories and resources to ensure consistency with the Declaration and to facilitate greater control and independent ownership of the Indigenous Estate by Indigenous Peoples to determine our own economic and social development priorities in accordance with article 32 of the Declaration.
6. Urge all States to work with UN Agencies to ensure that all Indigenous Peoples have access to support from programs such as the UNDP; and urge UN Agencies to facilitate greater access to their work and outcomes by all Indigenous peoples and their communities.
7. Recommend to the Economic and Social Council to urge the Human Rights Council to request the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples conduct a thematic study on economic and social development with particular consideration on the quadruple bottom line (economic, social, cultural, and environmental development) and practical implementation of economic and social rights at the community level.
8. Recommend to the Economic and Social Council to work closely with the Human Rights Council and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to develop detailed practical guidance that inform State processes in the development of strategies to implement the Declaration at the national and community level.