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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Seventh Session

New York, 21 April - 2 May, 2008

Item 9: Future Work of Permanent Forum

Water is Sacred

Collective Intervention

World Indigenous Water Caucus

Thank you Madame Chair. We wish to acknowledge and pay respects to the Onondaga Nation whose territory we are meeting on today. This is a collective statement from the following Indigenous organizations forming a World Indigenous Water Caucus to do ongoing work:

**Center for Organization Research and Education
Movimento Guaman Poma deAyala
The Koani Foundation
Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development
Indian Federation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples
Federation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Asia
Organización de Mujeres Kuri Inti
Rapanui Parliament
Australian Aboriginal Caucus**

**Bangsa Adat AlifUru of Maluku
Nihiyaw Cree Language and Culture Society
Ka Lai Maile Ali'i Hawaiian Civic Club
The Living Nation
Dimasa Peoples' Council
All Dimasa Student's Union
Asian Indigenous Women's Network
Pacific Caucus
Native Women's Association of Canada**

Worldwide, billions of people still lack safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, and related illnesses kill 4,500 children per day of whom the most vulnerable victims are the indigenous children. At the last Permanent Forum, 26 Indigenous Organizations made a collective intervention, requesting the forum recommend a World Indigenous Forum on Water and Peace. This recommendation was adopted as part of the final report of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in its sixth session (E/2007/43, par. 54). These recommendations are follow-up to this recommendation.

Recommendations:

We recommend that the Permanent Forum urge all UN agencies that deal with water and all nation states to:

1. Provide full financial support for a World Indigenous Forum on Water and Peace, that is led by, planned and developed by a wide representation of Indigenous peoples, both from Indigenous communities and Permanent Forum members. This forum can include government representatives, NGO's and corporations. The funding should be equitable to that provided to the World Water Forum.

2. Regarding water governance and protection:

- Urge nation states to change their constitutions to include the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (DRIP).

- Fully recognize and implement Indigenous peoples governance of water through the implementation of DRIP at all levels of jurisdiction, including regional and municipal governments.
- Include Indigenous peoples in any decisions and policy development affecting water, at all levels of government;
- Place strong controls on fossil fuel exploration, and call for moratoriums on nuclear power production, mega-hydro dam construction and deforestation;
- Encourage the full participation of Indigenous peoples within each of the UN programs, in the planning and implementation to find solutions to the crisis of water today.

3. Regarding water and spirituality:

- Recognize Indigenous peoples' right to practice their own forms of spirituality
- Declare all waterways, especially water sources as sites that are governed by Indigenous peoples;
- Include in all school systems the urgent need for the recognition of Indigenous governance of waters and the sacred nature of water;
- Call the UN Committee for the Protection of Sacred Sites and the UNESCO World Heritage Sites to recognize Indigenous peoples' critical role in protecting sacred sites, including sacred sites of waters for the protection of all of life.

4. Regarding water and language:

- Equitably fund community-based Indigenous language revitalization programs, including research and development, on par with other forms of education;
- Make funding available for the sharing of best practices between Indigenous communities so that they can learn about what has worked for other tribes;
- Implement the recommendations of the expert panel on Indigenous languages;
- Support a World Indigenous Forum on Languages.

5. Regarding water and education:

- Include in education programs local Indigenous contributions to education about traditional values;
- Support the development of Indigenous peoples' media and the inclusion of Indigenous peoples' traditional teachings in the media of dominant societies by urging nation states to include Indigenous peoples' contributions to the media industry, so that the media is a positive force in the education of Indigenous perspectives of water.

6. Regarding water and corporations:

- Recognize the sacred nature of water;
- Recognize the right of all of life to water and call for a moratorium on the privatization on water. Water should not be commoditized and water services have to be kept in the public, not the private sector;
- Provide access to clean water and good infrastructure to make clean drinking water accessible to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, or economic status;
- Establish a Charter of Corporate Accountability that is guided by Indigenous peoples and respected by companies;

- Require corporations to engage with full effective participation and to obtain free, prior and informed consent from Indigenous peoples on decisions that affect our waterways.
7. Urge nation states that are signatories to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to understand that they are responsible to recognize the pre-existing covenants that Indigenous peoples share with the Creator and Mother Earth and our responsibility to protect all waters, both marine and inland.
 8. Request a study to examine alternatives to globalization, and that traditional Indigenous forms of economies be examined and learned from.
 9. Call nation states to abolish nuclear arms and proliferation, because all war threatens all waters, all of life.
 10. Include Indigenous peoples, especially Elders and women, in disarmament commissions and peace negotiations.
 11. Increase significantly funding for safe, affordable, and sustainable supplies of drinking water and sanitation in the poorest regions of the developing world, particularly in the Indigenous Peoples' territories.
 12. Finally, we recommend that the Permanent Forum consider adopting water as the theme for its next session.