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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
Seventh Session  
New York, 21 April – 2 May 2008

**Agenda Item 9: Future Work of the Permanent Forum Including Emerging Issues**

- **Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People**
- **Water**

**JOINT STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF**

Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA)  
National Native Title Council  
Murray Lower Darling River Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN)  
Indigenous Peoples Organisation Network Youth Delegation  
Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre  
North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA)  
Menzies School of Health Research  
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (NACCHO)  
New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC)  
University of New South Wales, Indigenous Law Centre  
Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner  
National Indigenous Higher Education Network

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Thank you Madam Chair.

**This joint statement is to recommend that the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues adopt the following issues as the themes for its next Session in 2009.**

- **Water – Cultural Sustainability; and**
- **Implementation and Monitoring of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.**

Madam Chair

The issue of sustainable water supplies and uses for Indigenous peoples across the globe is more important today than it has ever been.

With greater pressure being placed by global demand through international trade, climate change and drought, and the ever increasing demand for economic purposes and profit particularly in the mining industry, our water aquifers, rivers, and springs are being depleted every second.

Articles 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People encourages States to engage Indigenous peoples in the future planning and use of our lands, territories, waters, coastal seas and other mineral resources.

These are our inherent rights as Indigenous peoples. With these inherent right comes our cultural and traditional responsibility to protect, conserve and utilise our water resources for future generations.

The Permanent Forum must adopt the theme of Water for the 2009 Forum to address the ongoing concerns such as the damming of our waters and the legal impediments that restrict our access to our traditional waters.

Madam Chair

The ineffective implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by Member States is an ongoing concern and must therefore become a priority agenda item for the Permanent Forum at its future sessions.

**The Permanent Forum should encourage all States to implement the Declaration to maintain the momentum and energy displayed at this seventh session by all Indigenous participants. As various human rights committees have already noted in their consideration of periodic reports, all States are expected to act consistently with the Declaration – regardless of how they voted at the General Assembly.**

**The Forum also has an explicit role in monitoring the role of UN agencies in relation to Indigenous issues and should therefore request that all agencies provide a report to the next and future sessions of the Permanent Forum. Such monitoring should assess the processes and policies they have developed to operationalise the Declaration throughout their respective agencies. This should form the core of discussion with agencies under the six mandated areas of the Forum.**

**We also recommend that UN agencies and States incorporate the principles of the Declaration into their activities under the Program of Action for the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Decade, and that this also be considered by the Forum at its next session.**

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides for redress or just, fair and equitable compensation for use of traditionally owned or otherwise occupied lands, territories, waters and coastal seas.

In my own country it is with a sense of optimism that we welcome the new Government of Australia. The Prime Minister has signalled a new attitude and new ways of thinking towards Indigenous issues including indicating Australia's intention to formally support the Declaration. Hopefully this will encourage the 3 other States who have not yet endorsed the Declaration to do so as well.

Thank you – Madam Chair