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**United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
4<sup>th</sup> Session – July 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**Agenda Item 4: Study on Indigenous Peoples and the Right to Participate in  
Decision-Making**

**Statement presented by Expert Member Wilton Littlechild**

**July 12, 2011**

Good afternoon to all delegations. Thank you to previous and current EMRIP members for their comments and thank you for the opportunity to speak on this very important agenda item, the Study on Indigenous Peoples and the Right to Participate in Decision-Making. The Expert Mechanism's Final Report on this matter is comprehensive in setting out the key areas required for realizing the right to participate in decision-making.

I would like to add one observation about this right. It relates to the State actions that create barriers to the very important participation of Indigenous peoples in international fora. This occurs through in a couple of ways. First, at times, States refuse to recognize Indigenous peoples' passports. Secondly, Indigenous peoples are refused visas or entry into States. This may be based, for example very recently, on the rationale that Indigenous peoples do not have adequate means of subsistence in the particular State or that the State determines that there is too great a risk that the Indigenous person will remain in the State once the event has past. These barriers must be removed if Indigenous peoples are to be accepted as equal members of the human family.

In fact, article 36 of the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* states,

“36. 1. Indigenous peoples, in particular those divided by international borders, have the right to maintain and develop contacts, relations and cooperation, including activities for spiritual, cultural, political, economic and social purposes, with their own members as well as other peoples across borders.

2. States, in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples, shall take effective measures to facilitate the exercise and ensure the implementation of this right.”

I would like to urge all State delegates to ensure that the right of Indigenous peoples to participate in international fora is respected, in compliance with article 36 of the UN *Declaration*.