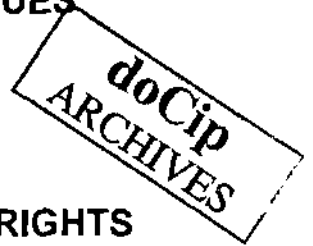


**UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES
NEW YORK,
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**CANADIAN STATEMENT ON
EDUCATION, CULTURE, HERITAGE AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Permanent Forum

Très heureux de participer à ce dialogue aussi important qu'historique, le Canada va parler aujourd'hui de l'éducation, la culture, le patrimoine et les droits de la personne chez les Autochtones. Ces questions, qui se trouvent au coeur même de l'identité des peuples autochtones, jouent un rôle important dans l'avenir que les enfants et les collectivités autochtones – et en fait la communauté internationale – parviendront à se créer.

As noted in the National Report of Canada for the Ten-Year Review of the World Summit for Children and the United Nations' Special Session on Children and Youth which was held just over a week ago, indigenous children represent the fastest growing population in Canada. There has been a recognition of the need for improvements in the quality of education for indigenous children and a commitment to providing First Nations with the tools to improve the quality of education at all levels. Yet while there are growing numbers of indigenous university graduates who can provide the basis for a dynamic new business and professional class and generation of leadership, there is a visible education attainment gap

between indigenous students and other Canadians. Compared with other Canadians, higher rates of indigenous children drop-out before completing grade 9 and a lower proportion have finished high school.

This education gap is not confined to Canada but exists in other countries as well. The effects range from increased demand for social assistance, to diminished ability to participate in the cyber-economy. The Permanent Forum offers the international community a unique opportunity to advance a global dialogue on indigenous education, including the sharing of information on best practices and where good results have been achieved. Among the ongoing challenges for indigenous education are credible and appropriate language and cultural programming. Canada looks forward to the contributions of the Permanent Forum in sustaining and promoting indigenous cultures around the world, as part of the dialogue on culture and cultural diversity.

The international dialogue on cultural diversity is occurring at many levels. The *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* was adopted by UNESCO at its last general conference in November 2001. The discussions on cultural diversity and globalization at the International Network on Cultural Policy, and the current preparations for a meeting of Ministers of Culture of the Organization of American States, demonstrate the broad discourse aimed at preserving and promoting the cultural diversity of humanity. Valuable work related to culture is being done through the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO's) Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore, which will be meeting again in a few weeks. The Article 8(j)

Working Group of the *Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)* is examining the preservation of the biodiversity-related traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples. The Permanent Forum has the opportunity to inform the work of the international community in general and establish links with international organizations, such as UNESCO, as they pursue implementation of their work plans.

Indigenous cultures are integral to Canadian culture and heritage. Key thrusts of our domestic programming have been to build capacity and to support indigenous peoples through their organizations and within their communities so that they can determine for themselves how they can actively and effectively participate in all aspects of Canadian society. Healing, culture, and language, are integral to Indigenous peoples' renewed sense of identity and evolving attachment and empowerment.

In Canada, national opportunities to raise awareness and celebrate indigenous heritage, culture and contributions include the National Aboriginal Day, celebrated on June 21st, and the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards. Both are associated with the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (IDWIP). In the last few years, Canada has supported the harnessing of new technologies to aid the exchange of information among indigenous people and others, including the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, the Aboriginal Canada Portal (internet: www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca) and the University of the Arctic. The Government of Canada promotes awareness, appreciation and preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage and supports cultural industries through various programs and agencies. In recognition

that much work needs to be done to further nurture and support the creative expression of indigenous peoples, to raise awareness among key decision makers about Indigenous artistic expression and to lay the groundwork for institutional change, a national conference on Aboriginal Artistic Expression will be held in Ottawa, June 18-19, 2002. This will be the first of a series of conferences leading to the conclusion of the International Decade.

Following extensive consultations with indigenous organizations, the Government of Canada has developed a program to support community and home initiatives for revitalizing and maintaining Aboriginal languages with the aims of increasing the number of speakers, expanding the areas in which Aboriginal languages are spoken, and facilitating inter-generational transmission of the languages. Canada recognizes that this is essential not only in facilitating preservation of threatened indigenous languages, but is a mechanism for the inter-generational transmission of intangible culture and ways of life.

The Permanent Forum offers an important opportunity to address these issues from a truly global perspective. It may provide valuable input to individual creators, indigenous peoples organizations, cultural policy experts and governments on appropriate and effective mechanisms for ensuring that the countless stories, experiences and creative energy of Indigenous peoples are given the opportunity to be told and to be shared with the whole human family.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Permanent Forum,

With respect to the elaboration of human rights instruments on the rights of indigenous peoples, Canada has been an active participant in international negotiations. The United Nations' Working Group on the Draft Declaration (WGDD) is making progress in addressing complex and fundamental principles and issues concerning the rights of indigenous peoples and the interests and obligations of states. Much remains to be done. At its next meeting in December, the WGDD will be dealing with self-determination, self-government, treaties, lands and territories, natural resources and other articles. Preparations leading into this session will be important. We are confident that extra effort, cooperation and determination by all parties to the negotiations will enable the common goal of elaborating a strong and effective Declaration before the end of the International Decade to be achieved.

Nous notons aussi que l'Organisation des États américains (OEA) réalise des progrès à l'égard de la proposition de Déclaration américaine relative aux droits des peuples autochtones. Nous estimons que l'échange d'opinions entre les représentants des Autochtones et des États dans ces deux tribunes engendreront une meilleure compréhension des questions complexes, ce qui est indispensable pour faire avancer la question des droits de la personne aux Nations Unies aussi bien qu'à l'OEA.

As Canada has noted before, the Permanent Forum's mandate provides clear and important recognition that indigenous issues now are seen as extending beyond human rights. As work proceeds in addressing issues of indigenous rights within other United Nations fora, the Permanent Forum has the opportunity to take a broad, holistic approach to its mandate.

Canada would like to express our support for the work of the Permanent Forum on indigenous Issues and say how pleased we are that at its first meeting, the Permanent Forum is addressing important questions related to indigenous education, culture and heritage. We look forward to working with the Forum, other states and with Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the globe, on matters related to improvements in indigenous education, preserving indigenous heritage and promoting the great vibrancy of indigenous cultures as a central element of the future of our societies and the rich cultural diversity of humanity.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.