

15 May 2002



Mr. Peter Heyward  
Deputy Permanent Representative of  
Australia to the United Nations, Geneva  
and Head of Australian delegation to the  
United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Dear Mr. Heyward

This letter is written on behalf of the Australian Indigenous organizations represented at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues:

A matter of concern that has been consistently raised by members of the Permanent Forum, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, governments and Indigenous organizations over the opening days of the Permanent Forum is the lack of funding currently available to the Forum to enable it to effectively fulfill its mandate.

The organizations listed above are of the view that a fully funded Secretariat is essential for the Permanent Forum to be able to effectively fulfill its broad mandate. Such a Secretariat is essential for the Forum to become an efficient mechanism which can provide meaningful advice, year round, to the agencies of the United Nations and ensure that there is an appropriate coordination and focus at the international level on the situation of Indigenous peoples.

In light of this critical situation, we are greatly concerned that to date the Australian government has not made any pledge of funding support to the operations of the Permanent Forum.

We request that the Australian delegation to the Permanent Forum inform those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative organizations present whether the government intends to provide funding support to the Permanent Forum.

The issue of funding is clearly of critical importance to the planning of the future activities of the Permanent Forum. In order to facilitate the full participation of the Australian Indigenous organizations present in the debate on Agenda Item 7: Work plan of the Permanent Forum, we request that you provide details of the government's approach prior to the commencement of that agenda item on Wednesday 22 May 2002.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank E. Guivarra". The signature is written over a horizontal line and is somewhat stylized.

Frank E Guivarra  
National Aboriginal and Islander Legal Services Secretariat