

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII) 2016
Agenda Item 4: Implementation of the Six Mandated Areas of the PFII with Reference to the UN Declaration Six Mandated Areas: health, education, human rights, economic and social development, environment and culture)

Statement delivered by Tina Ngata, Te Whānau a Hinerupe.

Tuesday May 10 2016

E te hau kāenga, Onondaga, nei ra te mihi ki a kotou, e ngā rangatira taketake o te Ao, tēna kotou. Ko Whetūmatarau te maunga, ko Awatere te awa, ko Hinerupe te marae, Ko Te Whānau a Hinerupe te hapū tieki whānau, tēna kotou katoa.

I wish to first acknowledge the traditional and rightful owners of the land upon which we are meeting and greet my indigenous sisters and brothers from around the world and the member states gathered here. I would like to thank the Chair and Forum for this opportunity to make my recommendation in regard to the implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and with specific regard to the role of Secretary General and United Nations organisational capacity.

The recognition and fulfilment of indigenous rights is a struggle that requires constant attention, and consistent champions. Although the distinct needs and strengths of indigenous peoples have been recognised in a number of UN declarations and documents, nevertheless it remains that without strong oversight and support, this vital factor will be neglected, to the detriment of all.

Never before in our knowing has our Earth been so gravely ill. Never before have we, the indigenous people of the world faced such immense challenges, and equally never before has the world needed traditional knowledge and indigenous wisdom and guidance more than now. Yet still, we continue to struggle for recognition of this relationship and our place in the determination of our future.

Conventional science has confirmed what many indigenous peoples have known for some time - that the severity of our condition calls for bold, immediate change. Conservative, incremental shifts will not save us. We require brave leadership that is not afraid to challenge the inherent assumptions upon which our very society, and economy, is based. It will take nothing less than this to secure a future for our peoples, and consequently to guide solutions for humankind.

I submit that next UN Secretary General must therefore be one that is confidently supported by indigenous peoples. However it is noted that there is a paucity of information available for indigenous peoples to analyse candidate performance on indigenous issues, and subsequently inform our support or otherwise.

It is further noted, with concern, that the nomination by New Zealand cites the leadership of New Zealand government as a credential for the role of Secretary General, when that same leadership

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oversaw multiple abuses of indigenous rights including the largest single Maori land alienation event of modern times, where we saw over 10,000ha of Maori land alienated through the Foreshore and Seabed Act. This leadership also saw abuses of human rights of Maori through the mischaracterisation of innocent Maori families as terrorists and subsequent violent armed invasions of Maori homes and police militarization against the community of Ruatoki. This leadership also saw increases in outcome gaps between Maori and Non-Maori – all of which have been reported upon by UN special rapporteur Rodolpho Stavenhagen.

It is further noted that the same candidate, in opposition to Maori, **refused to sign the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, labelling it divisive, and unimplementable.** Crown research records confirm that under this period of leadership New Zealand experienced near to the world's fastest rate of growth in greenhouse gas emissions, and nationally experienced a general degradation in freshwater quality.

This type of track record is of extreme concern, most especially for indigenous peoples, and if we hope to build capacity for the UN to support the implementation of UNDRIP it must begin from the Secretary General position down.

Therefore, noting that the permanent forum has requested guidance from indigenous peoples so that indigenous peoples may not be left behind, and recognising the importance and urgency of implementing UNDRIP, and further noting that the Secretary General role should be an exemplar in such matters, my recommendation is that the permanent forum impel the United Nations to specifically consider responsiveness to indigenous rights as criteria for the role of Secretary General.

I would also like to thank our member state NZ for raising the issues of natural heritage, self determination, Maori culture and Maori wellbeing. Sitting at the intersection of these issues is our traditional healing practices and these currently are under threat by the proposed Natural Products Bill.

This bill seeks to establish a regulatory authority that will have unrestricted abilities in defining and regulating natural medicines, their associated practices and practitioners. Of particular concern is

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the proposed funding structure that will restrict traditional practitioners, the cataloguing of our thousands of traditional medicine species which we have been given only until 30 May to provide, and the expectation that Maori healers will provide all of their healing knowledge to the Crown for regulation and protection, and the potential for that to lead to exploitation of our knowledge and assets. We assert the right to self-determine our means of protection of these knowledge and assets because that is OUR knowledge, those are OUR assets and only we know best how to protect them.

So while I thank our member state for their effusive support in the areas of natural heritage, self determination, Maori culture and Maori wellbeing I hope that will therefore extend to their reconsidering of the effects of the Natural Products Bill upon traditional medicine and healing practices.