

# THIRD SESSION OF THE PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

10 May through 21 May 2004, United Nations Headquarters, New York



## **Agenda Item 4 (b) Environment 19 May 2004**

### **Statement on behalf of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Indigenous delegates and honorable representatives of member states attending.

The Haudenosaunee extend our appreciation to the delegates attending the Third Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. We appreciate the moment of visibility for all of our peoples.

#### History

We have prepared a report for the session to be included in your report under the heading of environment.

On Tuesday, July 18<sup>th</sup> 1995, the Trusteeship Council hosted a Summit of the Elders here at United Nations Headquarters in New York City. The Haudenosaunee presented our proposal "Haudenosaunee Environmental Restoration, an Indigenous Strategy for Human Sustainability". This was in response to the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Chapter 265 Agenda 21 of the 1992 Summit and the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, Declared by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1994.

Mr. Chairman:

#### Challenges

I bring forward now to reiterate how seriously we take these declarations and mandates issued by the United Nations. For Indigenous peoples the General Assembly of the United Nations remains this beacon and hope for justice for our peoples. The climate change crisis demands a common and unified front to meet its challenges. Food, shelter, and water, the basics for human life and survival will become a universal problem that will destroy economies of the world's greatest nations.

We, the Haudenosaunee have been working diligently towards the environmental restorations of our lands and waters. It has been difficult because the sad truth is that we have received little or no support for our projects submitted to UN agencies by other Indigenous Nations and peoples with similar results. These projects were inspired by the promise of a "decade" dedicated to Indigenous peoples. The Haudenosaunee Environment Restoration project is case in point. On the positive side UNEP provided their offices, support and guidance to module the "Blue Book", the initial report submitted to the United Nations Agencies in 1995 and also sponsored the Summit of the Elders. This was a strong beginning for the Indigenous Decade. Unfortunately there was little or no response to our proposal. From our perspective and other Indigenous peoples and Nations, the Decade for Indigenous Peoples has been a dismal failure. There has been a clear lack of will on the part of member states to support Indigenous peoples projects. This did not deter our efforts, however, following our mandate to protect the welfare of the "Seventh Generation Coming" we organized The Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force and moved on with the work that faced our nations. We worked hard establishing conditions with both states and federal agencies; US EPA Region 2 has continued to support our efforts as we try to network with independent environmental organizations. Yet, in spite of these efforts we rarely maintain the status quo.

Mr. Chairman, here are some of our observations

#### The Real World From Our Perspective

The material values driving human consumption is challenging the carrying capacity of the earth to support this lifestyle. The capitalistic philosophy of a never ending "development" is unsustainable. The economic development philosophies of industrial states continue to ignore the fact that the natural resources that industries are dependent on are finite. Rarely, if ever, are natural resources factored into annual reports.

Indigenous peoples suffer from the extraction policies of governments and Multi-national Corporation. The policies are economic oriented, with little or no regard for our children's children. There is no long term vision in

world leadership today. The conditions of the natural world speak for life itself. UNEP's World Waterday, proclaimed Water: Two Billion People are Dying For It. Corporations are moving fast to privatize fresh water resources, and in Hopi land, precious aquifer water is being used to mine coal and slurry it to power generating plants in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA.

The greatest threat to the world's living creatures is the degradation and destruction of habitats. Indigenous peoples live within the context of the natural world and thus are most affected by the extraction policies of governments and corporations. Each year the forest cover shrinks by 16 million hectares, deserts are expanding, and hunting, harvesting and the exploitation of plant life now threatens more than a third of the birds and mammals in the world.

We know the litany of environmental degradation going on globally, the question is, what do we do about it?

#### Recommendations

1. Clearly, the United Nations has not fulfilled its promise to support Indigenous peoples in the Decade for the World's Indigenous Peoples. Therefore, the Haudenosaunee recommend that the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues promote and support the continuance of another Decade for the World's Indigenous Peoples, to begin immediately and continue at the end of the first Decade.
2. The recognition of treaties as instruments of international law is fundamental to the health and well being of Indigenous peoples. The Expert Seminar on Treaties, Agreements and other Constructive Arrangements Between States and Indigenous Peoples, The United Nations, 15-17 December 2003, was enlightening and fruitful, contrary to the assessment of one state. Therefore, the Haudenosaunee recommend that the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues establish a repository for Indigenous nation treaties with nations and states within ECOSOC and continue the Study on Treaties, Agreements and Other Constructive Arrangements Between States and Indigenous Peoples, recommended in document E/CN.4/Sub.2/1999/20.
3. The ultimate protection of Indigenous Peoples human rights and right to self-determination are embodied in the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Therefore, the Haudenosaunee recommend that the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues continue to pursue and gain the ratification of the draft Declaration by the General Assembly of the United Nations provided that it is consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights including the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to ensure and affirm the right to self-determination of all peoples proclaimed in the forgoing documents applies equally to Indigenous peoples.

Mr. Chairman,

The Haudenosaunee respectfully submit this statement with a full report on the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force (HETF) to your committee for inclusion on the findings of the Third Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Danayto

Oren R. Lyons – Faith keeper Turtle Clan  
Onondaga Nation  
Haudenosaunee