

**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Tenth Session – New York
16 – 27 May 2011**

Agenda Item 8(a): Future Work

JOINT STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMALA GROOM ON BEHALF OF:

Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement of South Australia
Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia
Aboriginal Medical Service Western Sydney
Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Action and Research
Gugu Badhun Limited
National Native Title Council
New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council
Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre

Thank you Madam Chairperson,

We begin by acknowledging that we are meeting today on Haudenosaunee Territory. We pay our respects to their Elders and Ancestors and to the Elders and Ancestors of all the Indigenous delegates attending the Permanent Forum this year.

The Indigenous Peoples Organisations (IPO) network of Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the discussion of the World Indigenous Peoples Conference which will occur in 2014 and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development which will occur in Brazil in 2012.

WORLD INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONFERENCE

We support the proposed World Indigenous Peoples Conference in 2014 and are pleased that the meeting will an opportunity to reflect upon and review the implementation of the program of action for the second Decade on the World Indigenous Peoples and decide on future action.

We strongly support the statements of the Pacific and the Sami who have called for an Indigenous Peoples Coordinating Committee to be convened to organise Indigenous participation at the World Conference and the proposed preparatory meeting at Alta in 2013. We agree with both statements which recommend the Steering Committee be convened as soon as possible and be given the opportunity to meet and organise before the Conference.

We further agree that the Committee should be comprised of representatives from at least seven Indigenous regions, as well as Indigenous women and youth.

We note that due to Indigenous disadvantage the world over there is a great need for the United Nations, NGOs, Member States and civil society to provide resources to enable Indigenous people to attend the Conference and actively participate in the organising of it.

We highlight the importance of Indigenous participation in the development of the Conference agenda. We recommend that the United Nations seek submissions from Indigenous peoples and organisations to ensure effective participation, transparency and inclusiveness, as an exercise of Indigenous peoples right to self determination.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

Sustainable development is a key issue for Indigenous peoples in Australia and it is pleasing that the Conference on Sustainable Development will include Heads of State and Government representatives. However, there is a fear, with such high level participation, that the voices and ancient knowledge of Indigenous peoples, including the Indigenous peoples of Australia will not be heard.

In Australia, sustainable development and climate change are areas dominated by non-Indigenous scientists and other professionals who have western qualifications that allow them to speak on such issues. There is a lack of Indigenous peoples in Australia with these qualifications, which means that our voices are not heard and our ancient knowledge not considered.

Even when Indigenous peoples of Australia are able to obtain the western qualifications needed, often, they are then expected to speak in terms of their western training, rather than from their Indigenous knowledge which has been passed down from time immemorial.

With regards to the institutional framework of the Conference, it is especially important to support the attendance of and provide a platform for Indigenous peoples who are the holders of traditional knowledge and the keepers of the most ancient cultures in the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues:

1. convene an Indigenous Steering Committee, comprising of at least one representative from each of the regions of the Permanent Forum (including Indigenous women and youth) and supported by at least one member of the Permanent Forum to work on Indigenous participation and involvement in the World Indigenous Peoples Conference proposed for 2014;
2. recommend that the Economic and Social Council make funding available for the Steering Committee referred to in recommendation 1 to engage in regular meetings between now and 2014 and each be funded to attend the Conference;
3. request that United Nations Voluntary Fund's mandate be expanded to allow Indigenous people to attend and participate in the World Indigenous Peoples Conference in 2014;
4. recommend that the United Nations Economic and Social Council make funding available for at least one nominated Indigenous representative from each region recognised by the Permanent Forum to attend the 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development;
5. recommend that the Economic and Social Council make funding available to ensure that each nominated Indigenous representative selected to attend the 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development and any others that are able to self-fund their attendance are given an opportunity to meet with each other and prepare their participation prior to the Conference;
6. conduct a study on the participation of Indigenous peoples in sustainable development and climate change and make recommendations as to how traditional Indigenous knowledge can be better incorporated into global work on these issues; and
7. recommend that the Permanent Forum appoint an Indigenous expert on sustainable development and climate change, who has a mandate to seek the views of Indigenous peoples and advocate those views internationally.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.