

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

**Agenda Item 8(a): Future Work**

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**INTERVENTION DELIVERED BY DONNA CAMVEL ON BEHALF OF THE PACIFIC CAUCUS:**

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Thank you Madam Chairperson,

The Pacific Caucus are pleased to be given the opportunity to contribute to the discussion of two important future conferences, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development which will occur in Brazil between 4 and 6 June 2012 and the World Indigenous Peoples Conference which will occur in 2014.

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE**

Sustainable Development is important for the members of the Pacific and we are pleased that the Conference on Sustainable Development will be at the highest level, including Heads of State and Government representatives. It is very important that there is a global political commitment to sustainable development. Many of the nations within the Pacific, including Micronesia, Tahiti, Tuvalu, Kiratbiti, the Torres Strait Islands, the Marshall Islands and coastal areas are the ones who have the most to lose if climate change and rising sea levels are not immediately addressed.

In New York this week a conference is occurring at the Columbia Law School entitled “Threatened Island Nations: Legal Implications of Rising Seas and a Changing Climate”. We recommend that the findings from that Conference and other meetings specifically about climate change in the Pacific be communicated at the Sustainable Development Conference in an effort to ensure that the urgent concerns of the Pacific nations are addressed.

In 2012, the Sustainable Development conference will focus on two themes:

- (a) a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and
- (b) the institutional framework for sustainable development.

With regards to the first theme, we stress the need for all lands but in particular island nations, such as those in the Pacific, to develop methods of sustainable and self sufficient food production. Food security is essential to addressing issues of self-determination, poverty and health issues facing many Indigenous peoples.

With regards to the institutional framework, it is important include Indigenous peoples at all level and to recognise that western concepts of economic and sustainable development are not always in line with Indigenous concepts.

An example of this misconception is the insistence by western countries to equate our mother earth as a commodity, putting a price on every aspect of it including carbon produced. We in the Pacific know that for Indigenous peoples, nature is an intricate part of our being that cannot be valued monetarily. Our mother earth is priceless but she is endowed with certain rights that command responsibility to those who use it.

Indigenous peoples bring special and often ancient knowledge about mother nature and must be consulted and supported to be involved in *all* global discussions on sustainable development and the environment.

## **WORLD INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONFERENCE**

We now move to the World Indigenous Peoples Conference which is proposed to occur in 2014. We thank the United Nations for their recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples by proposing that this meeting occur as a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly.

This will be a significant meeting for Indigenous peoples which we hope will assist us to move us forward within the United Nations system and in negotiations with member States about our rights contained within the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, including our right to self-determination.

From our perspective, the most important part of organising the Conference will be ensuring that there is adequate Indigenous representation. We want Indigenous peoples all around the world, including the Pacific, to be represented and included in this dialogue and we want to ensure that during the meeting, Indigenous peoples are on equal footing with the member States.

It must be acknowledged that Indigenous peoples in the world are the most disadvantaged and many face poverty on a daily basis. Because of this, steps must be taken by the United Nations to provide financial support to Indigenous peoples to enable us to actively participate in the organising of the Conference and to attend it.

We recommend that an Organising Committee of Indigenous peoples with representatives from each region as delineated by the Permanent Forum, be convened with a mandate of promoting inclusive and representative Indigenous participation at the Conference. We seek the support of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in this regard.

With regards to the venue, we ask that consideration be given to hosting the Conference in a location where Indigenous peoples are easily able to obtain visas and suggest opening the Conference venue up to bids from prospective member States.

Finally, with regards to the agenda for the Conference, we recommend that the focus be on the implementation of the Declaration, including promoting best practice examples; relationship building between Indigenous peoples the world over and how we might better work together; and improving relationships between Indigenous peoples and member States. We also recommend that there be space within the Conference to allow Indigenous groups to present on issues most impacting their peoples.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

1. 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;
2. 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;
3. develop a database to record best-practice examples of programs and activities which implement the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples both in its entirety and with regards to the specific articles;
4. convene an Indigenous Steering Committee, comprising of at least one representative from each of the regions of the Permanent Forum 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;
5. recommend that the Economic and Social Council make funding available for the Steering Committee referred to in recommendation 4 to engage in regular meetings between now and 2014 and each be funded to attend the Conference; and
6. request that United Nations Voluntary Fund's mandate be expanded to allow for other Indigenous people to attend and participate in the World Indigenous Peoples Conference in 2014.

Thank you Madam Chair.