

15th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Item 4: Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Global Indigenous Youth Caucus

Speakers: Conduct Hang

On the behalf of the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, we would first like to extend our greetings to the original indigenous people of this land and to the Chairman and members of the 15th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

We, the indigenous youth, representative of indigenous peoples from around the world have gathered here at the United Nations to reaffirm our rights and identities as indigenous peoples who proudly stand on the foundation laid before us by our elders and ancestors. We are here because they face dire conditions in our native lands. Our representation here at the forum is testament to the lived experiences and realities of indigenous peoples. Despite the destructive history of colonisation, indigenous peoples remain strong and alive as a people.

We urge the Permanent Forum to encourage member states, if they have not already done so, to support and implement the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples so that indigenous peoples can live healthy, happy and safe lives - lives that are not only protected here while at the Permanent Forum but also when we return home again.

Implementation starts with the coordination between indigenous groups and UN agencies. In order to truly and meaningfully better the lives of indigenous youth, it is important now more than ever for member states to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples everywhere.

Therefore, in accordance with the UNDRIP, we as indigenous peoples retain our right to define what it means to be indigenous. We reaffirm that member states do not have the right to define who is or is not indigenous as this will always remain first and foremost with the people themselves. When member states accuse indigenous peoples of not being genuine representations, it is a perpetuation of the practice to make us invisible.

As indigenous people, we reaffirm our right to control the language used in any and all things pertaining to us, thus we reaffirm our right to reclaim our traditional names, words, and meanings without sanction or censors by member states in accordance with Article 13 of the UNDRIP.

Therefore, we offer the following recommendations:

Recommendations:

1. The effects of colonization and assimilation have been extremely detrimental to indigenous peoples around the world. This includes the oppression of our language, history and culture, as well as the loss of our right to governance and self-determination. Therefore, we ask that the Permanent Forum work with all relevant United Nations agencies to consider convening an expert group on the decolonization of indigenous nations to work in conjunction with the Special Committee on Decolonization to assess situations in various regions and to support the efforts of our brothers and sisters who are seeking to have their nations re-inscribed on the list of non-self governing territories in accordance with Article 3 of the UNDRIP.

2. We request that the Permanent Forum coordinates with UNESCO to urge member states to support the expansion of K-12 indigenous language immersion and culture based schools in order to provide more indigenous youth with the opportunity to institutionalize the teaching of traditional knowledge and to support the efforts to help indigenous youth reclaim their cultural identity as indigenous people at an earlier age in accordance with Article 13 of the UNDRIP.

3. Finally, Mr. Chair, the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus requests that the Permanent Forum work with the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples and other UN agencies to create a separate fund for indigenous youth representation at the United Nations and to provide adequate training to empower youth to effectively engage in the global process. The United Nations provides an excellent platform for youth to connect with indigenous leaders, engage in real world issues and gain valuable experience on an international level. We are the next generation of indigenous leaders and thus we deserve a seat at the table where decisions that affect our futures are being discussed. Therefore, we also request that the Permanent Forum urge member states and organizations to recognize and include youth representatives in their delegations and in their work here at the Permanent Forum, on other UN platforms and back home in their communities.

The Permanent Forum has consistently taken a supportive stance towards the betterment of the lives of indigenous youth. We call upon you now to continue this legacy so that we can make the world a better place for all future generations of indigenous peoples so that we are able to one day join again with our ancestors with our heads held high from the success of our mission.

Thank you, Mr. Chair