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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF 2001
Geneva 23-27, July 2001

AGENDA ITEM: UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Thank you, Mr. President and all Members of E.C.O.S.O.C. for allowing me, once again, to address your substantive session. My name is Willie Littlechild, I.P.C. of the International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development, an N.G.O. with special consultative status at E.C.O.S.O.C. This intervention is also on behalf of the Samson Cree Nation and by consensus, the Indigenous Caucus which met here in Geneva over the two days [July 21 and 22/01] and those attending the W.G.I.P. Over one hundred [100] Indigenous delegates and representatives were present from all seven [7] Indigenous Peoples' regions of the world. I am accompanied this afternoon by other Indigenous N.G.O.'s with consultative status.

At the outset, Mr. President Simonovic, on behalf of the Indigenous Caucus, thank you very much for taking time from your very busy schedule to meet with us on Sunday. Your presence and the resulting information exchange was most useful. Thank you also, officially, to all Members of E.C.O.S.O.C. for your historic decision on resolution E/RES/2000/22 on 28 July 2000 at New York to establish a Permanent Forum.

Since then, the Indigenous Caucus Members have been very active with regional discussions and consultations on the U.N. Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples' issues. Delegations of the Indigenous Caucus have met with Her Excellency the High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, since the Secretary General's request for her office to be the lead agency for the implementation of your resolution. I personally want to thank also Her Excellency the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, for her very important statement on Indigenous Peoples in her report to you this afternoon; in particular, with regard to this agenda item 14(i) on the U.N. Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples.

While you are about to vote on a decision proposed by Denmark, whom we also thank for their ongoing support and diligence; there are some concerns of the Indigenous Caucus which, with your permission in the original spirit of the 1993 Vienna Declaration, we want to present to this year's substantive session:

1. As we both, I'm sure, want the U.N. Permanent Forum to be an effective and useful advisory body to E.C.O.S.O.C., we are concerned about its support and ability to function. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Her Excellency, Mary Robinson stated in her report and I quote: "Getting the Forum up and running will be a challenge for all partners - governments, the U.N. System, non-governmental organizations and Indigenous Peoples - and will require new working practices and innovative approaches." I underscore "new working practices and innovative approaches." We, therefore, respectfully recommend a separate secretariat be established and approved with all the necessary funding; to be staffed, in consultation with Indigenous Peoples, by Indigenous experts.

Attachment 11

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2. We are also very concerned about the possible termination of the U.N. Working Group on Indigenous Peoples. As you know, it has not exhausted its mandate, which is different from the U.N. Permanent Forum, nor has it completed its work. The U.N. Permanent Forum was not a trade off for the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, it provides an essential ongoing exchange of views between Indigenous Peoples and Member States of the U.N. Again we respectfully recommend the continuation of the W.G.I.P.
3. Over the months, since July 28, 2000, we in the Indigenous Caucus, have agreed on Indigenous regions for selection of our eight (8) Members to the U.N. Permanent Forum bearing in mind one of the initial fundamental principles of full and equal participation. We are concerned by your proposed method of selection as it poses potential regional stacking and respectfully recommend you recognize our regions as adopted by the Indigenous Caucus and request you respect our Indigenous systems of selection for our eight (8) Members.

Finally, Mr. President, I believe we will accomplish great things together in the U.N. Permanent Forum during this new millennium. We will in the spirit of the theme for the International Decade for Indigenous Peoples, have true "Partnership in Action." With proper follow up within E.C.O.S.O.C. and the General Assembly of the future recommendations and advice by the Members of the U.N. Permanent Forum, we will see Indigenous Peoples take their rightful place in the family of Nations and humankind with a full Right to Self-Determination as Indigenous Peoples. With your permission, Mr. President, I would now like to yield the floor to my colleague and brother, Tomas, to conclude our statement on behalf of our Spanish speaking delegates. Thank you.

W. Littlechild IFC

Mr. Wilton Littlechild, I.P.C.
July 24, 2001