

**DECLARATION ON THE USE OF PESTICIDES IN THE
YAQUI LANDS OF SONORA, MEXICO
PRESENTED IN VICAM PUEBLO, RÍO YAQUI,
SONORA MEXICO
DECEMBER 7, 2006**

In name of the Yaqui authorities of the Pueblos of Potam, Vicam, Torim, Rahum, and Huirivis, the community organization known as *Yaquis Unidos por la Madre Tierra* (Yaquis United for Mother Earth) and the International Indian Treaty Council (CITI), an international organization with Consultant Status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council, hereby pronounce:

The 5 Yaqui Pueblos sponsored an international conference from May 29 to 31, 2006 in the Town of Potam, with participation from more than 300 Yaqui community tribe members and persons from other indigenous tribes of Mexico, such as the Tohono O'odham, Huicholes, Mayos, and Zapotecas. Also participating were representatives of the Indigenous Peoples of other countries, including the Mayans of Guatemala, the Yaquis of Arizona, and tribes from other parts of the United States and Alaska, as well as physicians, biologists, scientists, and environmentalists.

At the conference, presentations were given to us on the known damage caused by the use of toxic pesticides in our communities. Many members of our Yaqui communities offered their testimonies on the cases of cancer, birth defects, and other harm being suffered by our communities on this account. The physicians and biologists also explained to us the long-term effects, as well as how our lands are losing their richness and our waters are becoming contaminated.

We also discussed the exportation of prohibited pesticides from industrialized countries such as the United States to other, undeveloped countries where they are still being used.

Now we understand that newborns and those yet unborn are some of the persons most gravely affected in the exposed communities, since they are especially susceptible to these toxics in their mothers' wombs. This applies as well to nursing infants. It has been reported that the number of cases of cancers and birth defects in children is increasing. Deaths among very young children and adults

from acute poisoning upon exposure to the toxic contamination resulting from aerial spraying of the crops and the use and unmonitored, unregulated storage of dangerous pesticides in rural communities, including the Yaqui Pueblos, have also been widely reported.

The development, health, and potential of our future generations is at risk. A scientist, Dr. Elizabeth Guillete of the University of Arizona, also participated in the conference and presented to us the studies she conducted in our Yaqui communities in Sonora. In 1997, she conducted a study on the Yaqui traditional lands; high levels of multiple pesticides were detected in the umbilical-cord blood of newborns and in their mothers milk. In addition, serious learning and development problems were discovered in the Yaqui children living in agricultural areas.

We have been recently informed by the health center of Sonora that 2 Yaqui communities, Potam and Bataconsica, have been found to be those most polluted with agrochemicals in this state of Sonora. We are highly concerned over this information.

Mr. Okechukwu Ibeanu, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Adverse Effects of the Illicit Movement and Dumping of Toxic and Dangerous Products and Wastes on the Enjoyment of Human Rights also sent us a letter that was read to all at the conference. He related his interest and support, as well as his concern over the effects of the use of toxic pesticides for indigenous communities in Mexico and other countries. Rapporteur Ibeanu also stated that the unsound conditions of the use of these chemicals in the communities leaves “individuals and communities unable to make informed choices about products,” in some cases “further aggravating conditions of poverty” due to their adverse effects on human health and the environment.

The Rapporteur also asked us to continue providing his office at the United Nations with testimonies on the effects and harm suffered by members of the Yaqui communities of Sonora, and we are fulfilling his request through the IITC. We thank them for their efforts and support in this situation.

On the last day, all the participants, including the authorities of the 5 Pueblos participating in the conference agreed upon 67 solutions and actions recommended by the participants as steps towards solving this serious problem that is affecting our communities, the health of our community

members, the land and water of our environment, and especially the quality of life of our future generations.

Next, we have decided that out of these 67 recommendations and actions, the following 8 are the most basic and essential in the short term to continue providing real solutions to the serious situation that has resulted from the indiscriminate use of pesticides and other agro-chemicals on our Yaqui lands. Today, we pronounce that these 8 points are the most basic and necessary requirements on which we insist, in order to ensure our welfare, health, food sovereignty, and our own economic development as Yaqui Peoples.

We therefore report with this Declaration that all that persons using Yaqui land, whether from here or elsewhere, must comply, starting this very day, with these requirements. We also have the support of federal government of Mexico on behalf of human rights and the rights of the Indigenous Peoples here in Mexico.

- 1) Under the principle of free, prior and informed consent, all persons who intend to use or apply pesticides or other chemicals to their crops must submit their plans and the products they intend to use, including their common and scientific names, their chemical contents, their known harm, their legal status (prohibited, restricted or allowed in Mexico and/or in other countries), and the recommended requirements for their use, to the authorities together with members of the community. After receiving this information and with sufficient time to study it, the authorities shall grant permission or denial for their use in Yaqui territories, and shall also specify under what conditions their use would be permitted.
- 2) Under no circumstances shall the aerial application (flyovers) of pesticides, fumigants, or other chemicals be allowed. Those products that are allowed under Point No. 1 would be by ground application.
- 3) The implementation of adequate training programs for workers or other persons who come into contact with pesticides so that they will be aware of the risks and how to avoid them if they have to use such products in their work.
- 4) The companies shall ensure that all workers shall have equipment and means of protection and adequate security to protect themselves and their

families from harm, and that all the requirements for the use of these chemicals are met.

5) The movement of the application equipment, storage tanks, and the used residues of the pesticides outside of the communities and populated areas.

6) Monitoring through a commission of technicians designated by the tribe and supported by the federal government to carry out the supervision of the pesticides applied and report crimes and problems to the traditional authorities and to other indicated agencies.

7) Medical and/or financial support for all persons and families who have suffered harm from the effects of the pesticides such as cancers, leukemia, and birth defects, among others, including for the families of those who already died, whether they are insured by the government or directly by the companies involved.

8) That the federal government guarantee that there is potable water that is not contaminated by pesticides in the Yaqui communities, including a program of regular testing of the canals, wells, and rivers that the communities use to ensure a monitoring of the condition of the existing water.

Thus we declare this 7th day December of 2006.

Signers: