

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 12th session, May 20 – 31, 2013

Conference Room Paper submitted by the International Indian Treaty Council

Agenda Item 3 (c) Follow-up on the recommendations of the
Permanent Forum on Culture including recommendations of the UNPFII
11th session in its Half-day discussion on the Rights of Indigenous
Peoples to Food and Food Sovereignty

“Since time immemorial corn in all its rich diversity has nurtured and fed us as the basis of our cultures, spirituality, health, traditional economies and food sovereignty. It is the sacred source of life and creation for Indigenous Peoples in many regions of the world.”

--- From the “Declaration of Santa Domingo Tomaltepec, *La Lucha Sigue, El Maiz Vive (The Struggle Continues, The Corn Lives)*”, Indigenous Peoples International Conference on Corn, Oaxaca Mexico, September 28- 30, 2013



“Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions”

-- Article 31, UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

“The health and survival of our corn mother/father in all its natural varieties, colors and original strength and resilience cannot be separated from the health and survival of our Peoples. Our struggles to protect corn as a source of our lives cannot be separated from our struggles to defend our rights to land, water, traditional knowledge and self-determination”.

-- “Declaration of Santa Domingo Tomaltepec, *La Lucha Sigue, El Maiz Vive (The Struggle Continues, The Corn Lives)*”, Indigenous Peoples International Conference on Corn, Oaxaca Mexico, September 28- 30, 2013

1. Indigenous Peoples and the Culture of Corn

Corn, Maize, or Maiz (Mais) is one of the most important food crops to be cultivated in Americas.¹ Corn is central to the traditional diets, means of subsistence, millennial Nation-to-Nation trade relations, creation stories, songs, traditional cultural and agricultural practices and ceremonies of Indigenous Peoples of what are now Mexico, Central, South and North America, the Caribbean and parts of the Pacific. Scientists estimate that corn was domesticated from a grass called *teocintle* by the Indigenous Peoples of Meso-America approximately 10,000 years ago.² For Indigenous Peoples such as the Mayans, who were created from corn, the relationship with corn reaches back far longer, to the very beginning of time. Maize is now grown all over the world, and has been referred to as humanity’s greatest agronomic achievement (Santini).

¹ The English word *maize* and the Spanish word *mais* are both derived from the indigenous Taíno word “**maisi**.”

² Santini, Cristina. "The People of the Corn." *Cultural Survival Quarterly*. 30.4 (2006): n. page. Web. 1 May. 2013. <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/mexico/people-corn>>.

For many Indigenous Peoples, corn remains the spiritual and cultural foundation of life, intrinsic to their food sovereignty, health and nutrition, subsistence, local economies, ceremonial and cultural identity and daily lives.

Corn is a fundamental foundation of food sovereignty for many Indigenous Peoples. Native Corn's capacity for resiliency and adaptation in response to diverse climate conditions is recognized by many Indigenous Peoples as their source of survival as the impacts of climate change, including changing weather patterns and rainfall levels, drastically impacts the productive capacity of their traditional lands.

The traditional resiliency and diversity of corn, which enabled it to adapt to diverse environments and climates from Meso-America, what is now southern Canada, the desert Southwest United States and the Andes Mountains, is under threat. Its life sustaining biodiversity has been undermined through the introduction of hybrid and GMO varieties and government policies enforcing their use, along with toxic pesticides and other chemically based methods in Mexico and other countries (the called Green Revolution"). Indigenous Peoples are fully committed to reverse this degradation for the survival of their Peoples and future generations.

2. The UNPFII: the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to Food and Food Sovereignty

On 14 May 2012, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues held a half-day dialogue on the rights of indigenous peoples to food and food sovereignty.

The half-day dialog also served to highlight a rights-based approach to Food Sovereignty and the many relevant provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This was underscored in the report of the UNPFII 11th session: "The Permanent Forum notes that indigenous peoples' right to food and food sovereignty is inextricably linked with the collective recognition of rights to land and territories and resources, culture, values and social organization. Subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing, traditional herding, shifting cultivation and gathering are essential not only to the right to food, but to nurturing their cultures, languages, social life and identity." ³

Interventions by Indigenous Peoples' organizations, including the IITC, also stressed that a rights and culturally-based approach are vital components of Food Sovereignty as a prerequisite to Food Security for Indigenous Peoples.⁴ During the half day dialogue, a representative of the

³ Report of the 11th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 7 – 18 May, 2012 E/2012/43, E/C.19/2012/13, paragraph 56.

⁴ The IITC, in its intervention to the 11th Session of the UNPFII, on Agenda item 6: Half day discussion of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to Food and Food Sovereignty, May 14th, 2012, presented by Andrea Carmen noted that "nearly all provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples address rights directly linked the

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization noted that the UN Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, which were officially endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on 11 May 2012, also recognize the cultural and rights basis of Food Security for Indigenous Peoples. The Voluntary Guidelines specifically affirm that “State and non-state actors should acknowledge that land, fisheries and forests have social, cultural, spiritual, economic, environmental and political value to indigenous peoples and other communities with customary tenure systems.”⁵ The Guidelines further affirm that “States should, in drafting tenure policies and laws, take into account the social, cultural, spiritual, economic and environmental values of land, fisheries and forests held under tenure systems of indigenous peoples and other communities with customary tenure system”.⁶ They also call upon States “before initiating any project or before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures affecting the resources for which the communities hold rights” to initiate “effective and meaningful consultation with indigenous peoples, through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent under the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples...”⁷

3. Indigenous Peoples’ International Declarations affirm a Rights-based approach and the Cultural Foundation for Food Sovereignty and Sustainable Development

A number of Declarations and Outcome Statements have been adopted at Indigenous Peoples international gatherings addressing issues of vital concern to their rights, ways of life and survival and focusing on Food Sovereignty and Sustainable Development. These have made significant contributions to the global understanding of the cultural foundation of Food Sovereignty and Sustainable Development from the perspective of Indigenous Peoples including traditional food producers and knowledge holders. They identify common threats and impediments to the full exercise of Food Sovereignty, and presented strategies, recommendations and commitments for action from the local to the international levels in response. These include:

exercise of Food Sovereignty. These include rights to land, territories and resources including water, health, cultural and spiritual rights, self-determination, education, environmental protection, education, language, productive capacity of lands, Treaty rights, free prior and informed consent, subsistence and development, control of traditional knowledge and cultural expressions including seeds, flora and fauna”.

⁵ UN Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on 11 May 2012, Article 9.1

⁶ Ibid, Article 9.7

⁷ Ibid Article 9.9.

1) **The Declaration of Atitlán**, from the First Indigenous Peoples' Global Consultation on the Right to Food in Atitlán, Sololá, Guatemala, April 17 - 19, 2002 with Indigenous Peoples from 28 countries and all regions participating, is still the operative policy document upon which subsequent Indigenous Peoples' Declarations and policy statements addressing Food Sovereignty have been based. The Declaration defined Food Sovereignty as follows:

"Food Sovereignty is the right of Peoples to define their own policies and strategies for the sustainable production, distribution, and consumption of food, with respect for their own cultures and their own systems of managing natural resources and rural areas, and is considered to be a precondition for Food Security"

The Declaration of Atitlán further affirmed that

"the denial of the Right to Food for Indigenous Peoples not only denies us our physical survival, but also denies us our social organization, our cultures, traditions, languages, spirituality, sovereignty, and total identity; it is a denial of our collective indigenous existence,"

2) **The 2nd Indigenous Peoples' Global Consultation on Right to Food, Food Security and Food Sovereignty**, September 2006, Bilwi Nicaragua, finalized the *"Cultural Indicators for Food Security, Food Sovereignty and Sustainable Development"*. The Cultural Indicators were developed over several years by the IITC, working with traditional Indigenous food producers, cultural knowledge holders and organizations from around the world as well as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and its Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development ("SARD") Initiative. The 11 Indicator Areas focus on traditional Indigenous food systems and the bio-cultural relationships, traditional knowledge and practices upon which they depend and provide tools to assess strengths as well as threats. They also reflect the inter-relationships between human rights, including self-determination, free prior and informed consent, access to traditional lands and natural resources, traditional knowledge and cultural heritage including seeds and the exercise of Food Sovereignty for Indigenous Peoples.

The Cultural Indicators were field-tested in a process which included the input of over 10,000 Indigenous Peoples from 6 countries over 4 years. The results were presented jointly by the IITC and UN FAO at the UN Permanent Forum's 9th session (19 – 29 April 2010) and confirmed the inextricable link between traditional cultures and Food Sovereignty.

3) **The Anchorage Declaration**, April 29th, 2009 was adopted by over 400 Indigenous Peoples from all regions attending the *Indigenous Peoples Global Summit on Climate Change* April 27th – 29th 2009 in Anchorage Alaska. The Summit included a track addressing Food Sovereignty and

Traditional Life way, where participants from all regions presented the devastating and rapidly increasing impacts of climate change on their home lands and traditional subsistence practices. In response, the Anchorage Declaration made the following calls for action:

13. In order to provide the resources necessary for our collective survival in response to the climate crisis, we declare our communities, waters, air, forests, oceans, sea ice, traditional lands and territories to be "Food Sovereignty Areas," defined and directed by Indigenous Peoples according to customary laws, free from extractive industries, deforestation and chemical-based industrial food production systems (i.e. contaminants, agro-fuels, genetically modified organisms).

14. We encourage our communities to exchange information while ensuring the protection and recognition of and respect for the intellectual property rights of Indigenous Peoples at the local, national and international levels pertaining to our Traditional Knowledge, innovations, and practices. These include knowledge and use of land, water and sea ice, traditional agriculture, forest management, ancestral seeds, pastoralism, food plants, animals and medicines and are essential in developing climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, restoring our food sovereignty and food independence, and strengthening our Indigenous families and nations.

4) **Declaración de Vicente Guerrero** was adopted on July 24th, 2010 at the "Nuestra Tierra, Nuestros Derechos, Nuestro Futuro", (Our Land, Our Rights, Our Future) Conference in Tlaxcala, México. Participants from 9 Indigenous Peoples in more than 30 communities in Mexico addressed threats to their food and seed sovereignty as producers of corn and other traditional crops. They called for "an international conference on corn in order to share traditional knowledge, native and non-native seeds, and related understandings... as a cultural exchange as well as a response to the threats posed by GMO corn and climate change".

5) **"Rio + 20 Indigenous Peoples' International Declaration on Sustainable Development and Self-Determination"**, adopted at the Indigenous Peoples International Conference on Sustainable Development and Self Determination, June 17th – 19th 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The International Conference was held in conjunction with the United Nations World Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio + 20, with the participation of Indigenous Peoples from all regions. The Declaration affirmed that *"We will define and implement our own priorities for economic, social and cultural development and environmental protection, based on our traditional cultures, knowledge and practices, and the implementation of our inherent right to Self-determination, and*

*made commitments for action within and among Indigenous communities, Peoples and Nations; with regards to actions by States and Corporations; and at the United Nations.*⁸

4. The report of the International Expert Group Meeting Indigenous Peoples: Development with Culture and identity: Articles 3 and 32 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The International Expert Group Meeting Indigenous Peoples: Development with Culture and identity was held 12-14 January 2010, at UN Headquarters, New York. The Expert Group Meeting also underscored the links between “well-being,” sustainability, self-determination, free prior and informed consent, access to traditional lands and natural resources, traditional knowledge, culture and identity.

The meeting’s final report, E/C.19/2010/14,⁹ presented a number of recommendations for consideration of the UNPFII 9th session, and affirmed that “*Respect for indigenous peoples’ traditional knowledge systems is the basis of their development with culture and identity and must be protected.*”¹⁰

5. The Indigenous Peoples International Conference on Corn, Oaxaca Mexico, September 28th – 30th, 2012

In response to a call by the participants at the Tlaxcala Conference in July, 2010, the “Indigenous Peoples International Conference on Corn” was convened in the territory of the Zapoteca Nation, in Santo Domingo Tomaltepec, Oaxaca, Mexico, from September 28th – 30th.¹¹ Over 220 representatives of Indigenous *Corn Peoples* from 48 Indigenous Nations, Peoples and communities and a number of Indigenous organizations from North, Central, South America, the Pacific and Caribbean participated.¹² The conference was sponsored by the International Indian Treaty Council and Unidad de la Fuerza Indígena y Campesina, and was co-coordinated by Permanent Forum member Saul Vicente Vasquez.

⁸ The Rio+ 20 Indigenous Peoples International Declaration and list of participants can be downloaded in English at <https://www.facebook.com/notes/global-indigenous-womens-caucus/rio20-indigenous-peoples-international-declaration-on-sustainable-development-an/248375061945165>; and in Spanish at http://www.cadpi.org/cadpi/files/6213/5465/5867/Declaracion_Internacional_de_los_Pueblos_Indigenas_sobre_el_Desarrollo_Sostenible_y_la_Libre_determinacion.pdf

⁹ *Indigenous peoples: development with culture and identity: articles 3 and 32 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Report of the international expert group meeting, 2010, United Nations, E/C.19/2010/14, is available at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/E.C.19.2010.14%20EN.pdf>

¹⁰ Ibid paragraph 40

¹¹ Two preparatory gatherings were held in Vicam, Sonora and San Francisco Magu, Mexico.

¹² The list of participants is enclosed in the Annex to this paper

The participants of the Indigenous Peoples International Conference on Corn adopted the Declaration of Santa Domingo Tomaltepec, *“La Lucha Sigue, El Maiz Vive” (The Struggle Continues, The Corn Lives)* on September 30th, 2013 by consensus.¹³ The Declaration affirmed that *“Since time immemorial corn in all its rich diversity has nurtured and fed us as the basis of our cultures, spirituality, health, traditional economies and food sovereignty. It is the sacred source of life and creation for Indigenous Peoples in many regions of the world.”*

The Corn Conference participants stressed that *“The health and survival of our corn mother/father in all its natural varieties, colors and original strength and resilience cannot be separated from the health and survival of our Peoples. Our struggles to protect corn as a source of our lives cannot be separated from our struggles to defend our rights to land, water, traditional knowledge and self-determination.”*

The participants committed to continue engaging with the United Nations, institutions such as schools and universities and all levels of government to *“demand the implementation of laws and policies that protect rather than violate our rights and the integrity of corn and other life-giving traditional plants and animals.”*¹⁴ They also committed to *“Pressure States and UN Bodies to fully implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including its recognition of our rights to lands, resources and territories, means of subsistence, environmental protection, Free Prior and Informed Consent, Treaties and Agreements, traditional knowledge including seeds, spiritual relationship to land and water, and all other rights relevant to the protection of our corn and our seed and food sovereignty;”*¹⁵

The participants at the Corn Conference also affirmed previous Declarations from Indigenous Peoples’ International gatherings including The Declaration of Atitlán, La Declaración de Vicente Guerrero, The Anchorage Declaration paragraphs 13 and 14, and the Declarations from the 1st and 2nd International Indigenous Women’s Symposiums on Environmental and Reproductive Health.

6. Recommendations to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 12th session under Agenda Item 3 (c), Follow-up on the recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Culture including recommendations of the UNPFII 11th session in its Half-day discussion on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to Food and Food Sovereignty

On behalf of the participants of the Indigenous Peoples International Conference on Corn, the International Indian Treaty Council submits the following recommendations to the Forum on

¹³ The full Declaration of Santo Domingo Tomaltepec is also enclosed in the Annex, and is available on line: <http://www.treatycouncil.org/PDF/CORNCONFERENCEDECLARATION%20final%20September%2030th%202012.pdf>

¹⁴ The Declaration of Santo Domingo Tomaltepec

¹⁵ Ibid

Indigenous Issues 12th session under the agenda item 3 (c). IITC recommends that the UNPFII12:

- 1) Call upon States to halt all genetic modification of corn and prohibit the use of genetically modified seeds in Indigenous Peoples lands and territories without their free prior and informed consent
- 2) Encourage international recognition and support for Indigenous communities such as those in Tlaxcala, Mexico and Pueblos in New Mexico, USA who have implemented GMO-free zones, and encourage similar actions by other Indigenous Peoples in all regions;
- 3) Call upon States and international agencies including WIPO to ban the patenting of corn and other traditional foods and medicines;
- 4) Call upon States to halt to the use of toxic pesticides in or near Indigenous Peoples territories including the production, export and import of pesticides by the US and other countries which are banned for use in the exporting country. This is a form of “trafficking,” *environmental violence* and *environmental racism*, causing untold amounts of death, illness and loss in Indigenous communities. The UNPFII should challenge national and International laws, including the UN Rotterdam Convention which permits this practice as a violation of a number of rights of Indigenous Peoples include right to health, Subsistence and Free Prior Informed Consent as affirmed in Article 29, paragraph 2 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

7. Recommendations to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 12th session under Agenda Item 8, Future Work of the Permanent Forum

Under the recommendations from the Half-day discussion on the rights of indigenous peoples to food and food sovereignty” the report of the 11th session on the UNPFII addressed the World Conference on Sustainable Development and the importance of Culture as the 4th pillar for Sustainable Development:

“The Permanent Forum recommends that the Conference approve the cultural indicators as a fourth “pillar” for the elaboration of development policies for all peoples.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Report of the 11th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, para. 63

Based on this recommendation and the consistent calls by Indigenous Peoples as presented in this paper, the IITC submits the following final recommendations to the UNPFII 12th session addressing the Future Work of the Permanent Forum:

5) The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 12th will hold an Expert Seminar on the Cultural Pillar for Sustainable Development including Food Sovereignty with a report to be presented at the 14th Session of the UNPFII. The Expert Group Seminar will include the direct participation of traditional food producers and cultural practitioners as experts.

8. Conclusion

The IITC's guiding principles affirm that that ***"Indigenous Peoples speak for themselves before the world community"*** as an integral aspect of self-determination. In keeping with this founding commitment, IITC continues to assert that Indigenous Peoples, in particular traditional food producers, knowledge holders and cultural leaders, are the true experts on Food Sovereignty. Their understandings, traditional knowledge and expertise are an irreplaceable resource upon which the collective cultural, physical and political survival of their Peoples depends, now and in the future. Their observations and recommendations are key to the viability of recommendations and proposals to and by United Nations bodies and UN FAO, including the seeking to make a meaningful and effective contribution in this vital area or concern. The contributions of traditional food practitioners (farmers as well as hunters, fishers, herders, pastoralists and gatherers) are essential for any assessment by the UN Permanent Forum addressing the problems and challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples as well as solutions to the global food, environmental and climate crisis that threaten all members of the human family.

In this regard, the participants in the Corn Conference agreed to "call on the International Indian Treaty Council to take *the Declaration of Santo Domingo Tomaltepec*, its recommendations and the issues it addresses to International and regional bodies relevant to the defense of human rights, health, environment, sustainable development, Food Sovereignty, Culture and Indigenous Peoples. These include UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues." In keeping with this mandate, and the specific request of the participants, the IITC includes the entire text of the Declaration as an annex to this Conference Room paper.

Annex: The Declaration of Santo Domingo Tomaltepec

THE DECLARATION OF SANTO DOMINGO TOMALTEPEC, SEPTEMBER 30TH, 2012, "LA LUCHA SIGUE, EL MAIZ VIVE" (THE STUGGLE CONTIUNES, THE CORN LIVES)

Indigenous Corn Peoples from 48 Indigenous Nations, Peoples and communities from North, Central, South America, the Pacific and Caribbean gathered at the "Indigenous Peoples International Conference on Corn" in the territory of the Zapoteca Nation, Santo Domingo Tomaltepec Oaxaca Mexico, from September 28th – 30th as well as at two preparatory gatherings in Vicam, Sonora and San Francisco Magu, Mexico.

We affirm our unity as Corn Peoples and Nations. Since time immemorial corn in all its rich diversity has nurtured and fed us as the basis of our cultures, spirituality, health, traditional economies and food sovereignty. It is the sacred source of life and creation for Indigenous Peoples in many regions of the world.

The health and survival of our corn mother/father in all its natural varieties, colors and original strength and resilience cannot be separated from the health and survival of our Peoples. Our struggles to protect corn as a source of our lives cannot be separated from our struggles to defend our rights to land, water, traditional knowledge and self-determination.

We affirm the Declaration of Atitlan of 2002, "IN AGREEMENT that the content of the Right to Food of Indigenous Peoples is a collective right based on our special spiritual relationship with Mother Earth, our lands and territories, environment, and natural resources that provide our traditional nutrition; underscoring that the means of subsistence of Indigenous Peoples nourishes our cultures, languages, social life, worldview, and especially our relationship with Mother Earth; emphasizing that the denial of the Right to Food for Indigenous Peoples not only denies us our physical survival, but also denies us our social organization, our cultures, traditions, languages, spirituality, sovereignty, and total identity; it is a denial of our collective indigenous existence.

We also affirm other Declarations by Indigenous Peoples for the protection of our Food sovereignty including Declaración de Vicente Guerrero, paragraphs 13 and 14 of the Anchorage Declaration, the Declaration of Atitlán, the Declarations from 1st and 2nd International Indigenous Women's' Symposiums on Environmental and Reproductive Health, and the "Declaration of Seed Sovereignty A Living Document for New Mexico".

This struggle is not an easy one. The institutions of colonization, as well as the mining,

biotechnology and chemical corporations, are well financed. Their activities are organized with sole objective of profiting from our lands and resources without consideration for the impact on our health or survival, or the wellbeing of Mother Earth and future generations. We reject this worldview which has caused so much suffering and destruction. We also reject the commodification and genetic modification of corn as an offense against our spiritual and cultural identity. We call instead for a focus on the sustainable and respectful use of corn as a basis for our traditional and collective economic, social and cultural development.

The increasing concentration of land, water, seeds, financing and genetic resources in the hands of a few multi-national corporations, and the proliferation of extractive industries, mega-projects and industrial agriculture, together with the causes, effects and false solutions to climate change including agro-fuel production using corn, are direct threats to our corn and all aspects of our traditional food production.

In exercise of our self-determination we affirm the right to define and continue our own forms of development, including our food and seed sovereignty. We also affirm the urgent need to revitalize our Indigenous trading relationships in order to once again share and exchange seeds, knowledge and traditional food products. The methods and seeds passed down to us from our ancestors hold the key to our resistance and survival in the face of climate change and a number of other threats. Corn will continue to be the source of our survival.

We also affirm that the solutions to the threats we face are within our Indigenous Peoples. We will continue to be engaged with the United Nations, institutions such as schools and universities and all levels of government to demand the implementation of laws and policies that protect rather than violate our rights and the integrity of corn and other life-giving traditional plants and animals. But we will not depend on them, or wait for them to change in order to take steps to protect our ways of life. We commit to immediate and urgent actions within our own communities and Nations, calling on support from our Traditional Indigenous governments, to ensure that the use of our traditional seeds and knowledge is revitalized and passed on to our future generations.

Accepting collective commitments and coordinated actions as Corn Peoples from many regions will give us strength and mutual support, and provide a basis for continued seed and knowledge exchange. This is our right, and our sacred responsibility.

Therefore we resolve with one voice to carry out the following actions.

- 1) Restore and strengthen our traditional local economies, governing structures, laws and authorities for the protection of corn and food sovereignty;
- 2) Restore and transmit to future generations the traditional methods for revitalizing the earth and growing food with approaches using Indigenous science proven by our peoples since time immemorial, with respect to relationships of the moon-sun, nature-earth, water-rain, female-male, and the life giving properties of seeds and mother corn;

3) Re-establish Indigenous seed banks/seed archives and trade relationships for traditional corn seeds, especially those with resistance and adaptability to changing climate conditions and promote the development and implementation of community based plans for adaptation to climate change;

4) Form cooperative relations to support the creation of Indigenous marketing and “value added” production opportunities based on sustainable, community and collective values for Indigenous farmers and food producers on the local, regional, national and international levels, focusing on corn and other local products produced using original seeds, traditional and organic farming;

5) Organize our communities and Peoples to take action to defend our mother earth, lands and water, forests, corn and other traditional foods and medicines, and ensure that Indigenous Peoples struggling for such rights are protected as human rights defenders;

6) Continue to oppose the use and modification of corn and other basic and traditional food products for bio-fuels on the local, national and international levels;

7) Call for the immediate halt to all genetic modification of corn, and adopt community resolutions, with the support of our tribal leaders and traditional authorities as well as organizations, prohibiting the use of genetically modified seeds in our lands and territories; Support Indigenous communities such as those in Tlaxcala Mexico and Pueblos in New Mexico USA that have implemented GMO-free zones, and encourage similar actions by other Indigenous Peoples in all regions; and resist and oppose the patenting of corn and other traditional foods and medicines;

8) Stand firm to halt to the use of toxic pesticides in or near our territories including the production, export and import of pesticides by the US and other countries which are banned for use in the exporting country, a form of “trafficking,” which constitutes environmental violence and racism and causes untold amounts of death, illness and loss. We challenge national and International laws, including the UN Rotterdam Convention which permits this practice, and call upon the government of Mexico and other States to implement their human rights obligations by halting the import of banned pesticides. We support the continued implementation of the declaration by the Yaqui Traditional Authorities prohibiting aerial spraying of pesticides in the Yaqui Territories (Sonora), the total rejection of pesticides use by the community of San Pedro Jocotipac (Oaxaca) and encourage other Indigenous communities to take similar actions;

9) Promote the recommendation of UN CERD addressing the US and Canada that countries are responsible for human rights violations by corporations they license. We call on the IITC to prepare, in collaboration with affected communities, a shadow report to the CERD for the next review of the US in 2013 regarding the export of banned and restricted pesticides and GMO seeds, as well as the attempt by US corporations to control the traditional seeds of Indigenous Peoples;

10) Pressure States and UN Bodies to fully implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including its recognition of our rights to lands, resources and territories, means of subsistence, environmental protection, Free Prior and Informed Consent, Treaties and Agreements, traditional knowledge including seeds, spiritual relationship to land and water, and all other rights relevant to the protection of our corn and our seed and food sovereignty;

11) Promote the implementation of the UN Declaration within all UN and other International and Regional agencies, institutions and processes, as well as the national level, including the current processes such as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, implementation of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines of Land Tenure, Forests and Fisheries, the Stockholm Convention and the new globally binding international instrument on Mercury;

12) Educate and provide opportunities for sharing experiences in and among our communities, including women and youth, through assemblies, trainings, workshops and development of materials, including in indigenous languages and using various forms of media about the dangers of genetically modified seeds, chemical pesticides and fertilizers to human and environmental health, as well as relevant human rights and ways to defend our corn and food sovereignty;

13) Implement in tribal or state run schools which our children and youth attend, and in our own communities, opportunities for them to learn from traditional knowledge holders and practitioners, their traditional language and also food production knowledge and practices;

14) Initiate and organize an Indigenous Peoples Food Sovereignty Network on the National and International levels, co-coordinated by the IITC and others who are interested, to continue exchanging knowledge, information and seeds, and coordinating mutual support, gatherings, educational activities, and joint campaigns to address threats and defend our food sovereignty, land, water and natural environment; and make alliances for participation and information exchange with other Food Sovereignty Networks on the national, regional and International levels;

15) Develop and promote alliances with Indigenous Peoples as well as non-indigenous organizations, campesinos and other food producers, local, state and national governmental bodies, legislators, parliamentarians and academic institutions to build understanding and support and advance policies that respect and defend Indigenous Peoples' perspectives about corn and other traditional foods;

16) Disseminate this Declaration in our own communities and Nations, and call on the International Indian Treaty Council to take this Declaration, its recommendations and the issues it addresses to International and regional bodies relevant to the defense of human rights, health, environment, sustainable development, Food Sovereignty, Culture and Indigenous Peoples. These include UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

We will keep our hearts and our commitments strong, knowing that we share the threats, but also the spiritual connections and the solutions. We know that the change we need begins with us and our Peoples.

We thank the community of Santo Domingo Tomaltepec for their warm hospitality, and the International Indian Treaty Council and the Unidad de la Fuerza Indígena y Campesina for their coordination of this historic gathering.

We make these commitments for the survival of our future generations with gratitude for the profound knowledge and wisdom of our ancestors and the sacred spirit of corn which has sustained and will continue to sustain us. We will move forward and continue to defend our lives and survival. Standing together will make us stronger. Life is the only choice and the only option.

Adopted by Consensus September 30th, 2012, Santo Domingo Tomaltepec, Oaxaca Mexico

The first Indigenous Peoples International Conference on Corn registered over 220 participants representing Indigenous Peoples from various States in Mexico, as well as Guatemala, Peru, Canada, United States, and New Zealand. Participating Indigenous Peoples' communities, organizations, and networks included: UFIC Yucatan; S.S.S. Cabañas Ecoturísticas "Ubel Maya"; UFIC (Oaxaca); Mujeres Artesanas Manos Creadoras; Comunidad Huave (UFIC); Comité Municipal; 7 Regiones; Unidad Indígena Totonaca Nahuatl; RITA-RED-Tabasco; Proyecto de desarrollo rural integral Vicente Guerrero AC; Di Sugave A Nana Shimjai; Consejero Basario de Potam; Medicina Ancestral; Jittoa -Bat-Natika Weria; Red Indígena Hñahñu; RITA Veracruz; Frente Democrática Zacatecas; International Indian Treaty Council; Fundación para la Promoción Conocimiento Indígena; Movimiento Juventud Kuna; Centro para la Autonomía y Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas; Pastoral kolol qnan txotx; Centro Pluricultural para la Democracia, CAPDI, CEPRODI, RAAN. Indigenous Nations represented included Zapoteca; Inca Quechua; Maya-Kiche; Maya Kaqchiquel; Mohawk Tewa; Yaqui; Dine; Hñahñu; Nahuatl; Otomi; Cree, Anishinabe; Miskitu; Mayo, Mazateco; Teotitlan del Valle; Katchikel; Huave; Sewepemc; Maori; Pit River; Edzná Maya; Mixteco; Totonaca- Náhuatl; Chontal; Otomí; Nahuatl; Maxcanu and Pit River Nation, Pueblo and Haudenosaunee.¹⁷

¹⁷ Participants came from various Indigenous communities, countries, states, provinces, etc. including: Yucatan, Mexico; Merida Yucatan, Mexico; Ejido Usazil, Mexico; Juchitan de Zaragoza, Oaxaca, Mexico; San Francisco del Mar, Oaxaca, Mexico; Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca, Mexico; Santiago Suchilquitongo, Oaxaca, Mexico; Juchitan, Oaxaca, Mexico; Valles Centrales, Ahuja, Oaxaca, Mexico; Niltepec, Oaxaca, Mexico; Asunción Nochixtlan, Oaxaca, Mexico; Santo Domingo Zanatepec, Mexico; San Pedro Jocotipac, Oaxaca, Mexico; Istmo de Tehuantepec, Oaxaca, Mexico; Juchitan de Zaragoza, Oaxaca, Mexico; La Soledad, Oaxaca, Mexico; Guerrero de Humboldt, Oaxaca, Mexico; Huhuetla, Puebla, Mexico; Ahuacatlán, Puebla, Mexico; Tlalpan, Distrito Federal, Mexico; Ixtapa Zihuatanejo, Guerrero, Mexico; Nacajuca, Tabasco, Mexico; Vicente Guerrero, Tlaxcala, Mexico; San Francisco Magú, Nicolás Romero, Estado de México, Mexico; Río Bravo, Tamaulipas, Mexico; Potam, Río Yaqui, Sonora, Mexico; Vicam, Sonora, Mexico; San Pedro Dios Padre, Hidalgo, Mexico; Mineral del Monte, Hidalgo, Mexico; Ixmiquilpan, Hidalgo, Mexico; Cuetzalan, Puebla, Mexico; Ejido, Campeche, Mexico; Tatahuicapan, Veracruz, Mexico; Zacatecas, Zacatecas, Mexico; Kuna Yala, Panamá; Bilwi Nicaragua; San Miguel Ixtlahuacán, Guatemala;

Tecpan Guatemala, Pascua Yaqui Pueblo; Quetzaltenango, Guatemala; New Mexico, USA; Alberta , Canada; Manitoba , Canada; Beaver Lake and Ermineskin Alberta , Canada; San Francisco, Peru; and Hamilton, New Zealand (Aotearoa).