

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Thirteenth Session

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Item 9 Future work of the Permanent Forum, including emerging issues

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Thank you Madame Chair. We take this opportunity to present a brief intervention regarding the future work of the Permanent Forum.

We urge the Permanent Forum to hold a half-day session or conduct a study on protected areas, conservation, parks and their impacts on the access and rights of Indigenous Peoples. Articles 8, 10, 13, 26, 29 and 30 of the UN Declaration provide support for this recommendation. National parks, wildlife conservation areas, “paper parks” (where land is set aside for a park but is used for development such as hydro projects, extractive industries, biopiracy, amongst others) as well as areas set aside under international initiatives such as UNESCO World Heritage Sites are of serious concern to the livelihoods, cultural integrity and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples. Such a study could include the successful efforts of Indigenous Peoples to create successful areas like food sovereignty zones and Indigenous Peoples’ and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs).

The autonomy, self-determination and cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples is not respected by international agencies, governments, the private sector and in particular the tourism industry. Indigenous Peoples have become conservation refugees, being forced out of their ancestral lands and territories to make way for the creation of parks, protected areas and the privatization of lands and natural resources without our free, prior and informed consent. Indigenous Peoples also face militarized conservation, where such areas are guarded by military presence. Indigenous conceptions of conservation in accordance with their knowledge systems, cultures and legal orders must be recognized and respected. Indigenous names of such places must also be reinstated.

With respect to the report of UNESCO to this Session of the Permanent Forum, and further to Agenda Item 8 (“Comprehensive Dialogue with UN Agencies and Funds”) **we recommend that the Permanent Forum urge UNESCO to engage with Indigenous Peoples respecting the changes to the Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention.** This must be done in accordance with World Conservation Congress Resolution 1.49-1.57, which should be fully implemented by International Union for Conservation of Nature. **We call on UNESCO to implement the Call to Action document from the International Expert Workshop on the World Heritage**

Convention and Indigenous Peoples held in Copenhagen in September of 2012, addressing the urgent need to make the implementation of UNESCO's World Heritage Convention consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Madame Chair, addressing another key issue, as Indigenous land and human rights defenders, **we recommend that the Permanent Forum hold a half-day session or conduct a study on the use of counter-terrorism and anti-terrorism legislation against Indigenous Peoples Rights movements.** There are numerous examples of this trend across all regions of the world, where Indigenous Peoples are being labeled as “threats to national security” effectively criminalizing the recognition of Indigenous rights and silencing Indigenous Peoples. **We also recommend that the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders take this into account.**

Finally, Madame Chair, **we recommend that the Permanent Forum hold an Expert Group Meeting on the status of Indigenous Peoples and their participation within the UN system, in accordance with the following articles of the UN Declaration 18, 20, 41, 42, 46 and in particular Article 34. In so doing, the Permanent Forum should make concrete recommendations to ECOSOC and throughout the UN System on the implementation of the report to the Human Rights Council on “Ways and means of promoting participation at the United Nations of indigenous peoples’ representatives on issues affecting them.”** Madame Chair, we contend that Indigenous Peoples must no longer be required to register as NGOs and civil society to participate in the UN system. We must be able to register with our own institutional structures, customs, Indigenous governments, and our own chosen representatives as per Article 34 of the Declaration.

Thank You.