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United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development
Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting CSD 15

Opening Statement

Monday, February 26, 2007

Indigenous Peoples Major Group – Opening Statement (Written Version)

Presented by Estebancio Castro Diaz

International Indian Treaty Council

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported in February 2, 2007 that human generated greenhouse gas emissions are producing the rising global average air and oceans temperatures, the widespread melting of snow and ice and rising global sea levels.

But Indigenous Peoples do not need the confirmation of such high-level panels prove to know that the world is under threat. The effects of Climate Change are a day-to-day reality for the worlds' Indigenous Peoples. Their lands, waters, ecosystems and traditional means of subsistence are increasingly impacted. These impacts are especially evident for Indigenous Peoples who live in small island states and in the arctic region.

The worlds' leaders need to accept their responsibilities and play their parts in reducing greenhouse gasses. There is no time to lose in arguing about who is most at fault or most responsible. The way of life of Indigenous Peoples are under an immediate threat. But we must understand that the changes in our climate will affect all our societies. It is essential that policy makers make firm commitments to decisive action in how to reduce carbon emission and how best to adapt to inevitable changes in climate. Our grandchildren will surely hold us accountable for the decisions we make today.

This CSD session provides us with the opportunity to undertake bold new initiatives, consider and prioritize options presented by the major groups, and develop appropriate actions backed by adequate resources. Consideration requiring immediate response include the need for large-scale sustainable energy production as well as ways to address the impacts of industrial development and continued fossil fuel dependency as the main source of air pollution and climate change.

Indigenous Peoples would like to take this opportunity to submit some of our priorities for actions:

- The Commission at its fifteenth session must demonstrate a model for leadership and inclusive governance on these thematic issues, based on social and ecological balance, sustainability for future generations and justice. Good governance comprises robust policy and regulatory frameworks, full corporate accountability for social and environmental impacts, participatory decision-making that values the central contributions of all major groups and respect for human rights.
- Clean production — the continuous application and evaluation of precaution, prevention, democracy and producer responsibility for impacts caused by production processes and products.
- The phasing out of nuclear energy and the shift of subsidies to the research, production and dissemination of clean, renewable energy technologies. Nuclear energy is not clean and renewable. The negative legacy of radiation impacts at all stages of the nuclear production cycle, including the severe and long lasting impacts of uranium mining, needs to be investigated and reparations made to affected communities, including Indigenous Peoples.
- The slowing down of climate change requires slowing down and halting of extraction and burning of fossil fuels resulting in the expanding release of carbon into the atmosphere. Social movements and indigenous communities fighting for the maintenance of customary traditional land use are also addressing the problems of climate-destabilizing land clearance, fossil fuel extraction, commercial logging, industrialized intensive agriculture and long-distance food transport.

In our Priorities for Action in energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change (E/CN.17/2007/7), Indigenous Peoples' Caucus summarized the input and contributions of Indigenous Peoples to the fifteenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Our document outlines the contribution of Indigenous Peoples to the discussion on policy options and possible actions to advance implementation. We consider our submissions are basic, cost effective and easy to implement in the field.

For our future generations and all our relations,

Thank you.