

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
 Third Session, New York, 10-21 May 2004
 Agenda Item 4(b) of the Provisional Agenda: ENVIRONMENT

Statement Regarding Water, Climate Change/Global Warming and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)

Group Statement: *Indigenous Environmental Network, International Indian Treaty Council, Consejo Indio de Sor America, Buffalo River Dene Nation, Dene Youth Alliance, Gwichin Steering Committee, Africa Indigenous Womens' Network, Tebtebba, United Confederation of Taino Peoples, Consejo General de Tainos Borincanos, Native Children's Survival, The Saartjie Baartman Indigenous Medicine Institute, American Indian Law Alliance*

Presented by Tom Goldtooth, Indigenous Environmental Network/International Indian Treaty Council

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Permanent Forum, we recognize the substantial recommendations of the previous session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, addressing agenda issue 4(b), environment, as well as the response reports of UN agencies. From the first session to this third session of the Permanent Forum, the environment continues to be a mandated issue that if not adequately addressed, could result in further destruction of Indigenous Peoples' health, culture, language, community and degradation and lost of our land, water, air and those biospheres and biodiversity that sustain our communities.

Due to limitation on time and not to duplicate other interventions on environment, this intervention will be limited to recommendations for Permanent Forum action around the issues of water, climate change, the Stockholm Convention on POPs:

Recommendations of Action

1. We recommend that the Permanent Forum, in acknowledgement of the 13th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 12) in 2005, whose agenda is the negotiation of the thematic issues of water, sanitation and human settlement, recommend to the CSD, GEF and States, to develop financial mechanisms that would permit Indigenous Peoples, indigenous experts, traditional knowledge holders and water specialists, from all regions of the world to participate in the 13th Session of the CSD in 2005.
2. We recommend that the Permanent Forum follow up on last year's recommendation, and recommend to the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) that it sponsor an open-ended workshop to consider the establishment of a Working Group on Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change, assuring the participation of Indigenous Peoples from all region of the world, as well as interested member States.
3. We also recommend to the Permanent Forum that it invite the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights to conduct an international consultation on Indigenous Peoples and climate change, with the participation of interested States, experts and Indigenous Peoples. This consultation should consider the UNFCCC, World Bank Prototype Carbon Fund, and other international and regional policies and programmes on climate change and carbon emissions trading and Indigenous Peoples' collective human rights.

Mr. Chair, as a last point, Indigenous Peoples that have worked on the global legally-binding treaty on the elimination of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) are proud to announce the Stockholm Convention on persistent organic pollutants is now international law that has entered into force on Monday, 17 May 2004, marking the start of an ambitious international effort to now rid the world of PCBs, dioxins and

furans, and nine highly dangerous pesticides. Governments are seeking a rapid start to action against POPs when they meet for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention (COP 1) in 2005. *For this reason;*

4. We recommend that the Permanent Forum recommend to the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Stockholm Convention to sponsor an open-ended workshop for the establishment of a Working Group on Indigenous Peoples within the COP and assuring for the participation of Indigenous Peoples, from developed and undeveloped countries, as well as interested member States.

Mr. Chair, time permitting I will provide some basis for these recommendations:

Water systems within the territories of Indigenous Peoples continue to be polluted with toxic chemicals and are being depleted or converted into destructive uses through diversion and dams, mining and mineral extraction, energy development, mining of groundwater and aquifer for industrial and commercial purposes. In the tropical southern and northern forest regions, deforestation has resulted in soil erosion and thermal contamination of water.

Throughout Indigenous territories worldwide, Indigenous peoples are witnessing the increasing scarcity of fresh waters and the lack of access that Indigenous communities and other life forms such as the land, forests, animals, birds, plants, marine life, and air have to waters, including oceans. In these times of scarcity, Indigenous peoples are witnessing governments creating commercial interests in water that lead to inequities in distribution and prevent access to the life giving nature of water.

Water systems within the territories of Indigenous Peoples are increasingly being governed by externally imposed management systems, as well as trade agreements. Water is being treated as a commodity and as a property interest that can be bought, sold and traded in global and domestic market-based systems.

The burning of oil, gas, and coal, known collectively as fossil fuels is the primary source of human-induced climate change. Global warming poses significant threats to Indigenous and local communities from the Arctic, Latin America, Caribbean, Africa, Asia and Southeast Asia, Pacific Islands, Russia, North America and every region and territory of the world. Climate change, if not halted, will result in increased frequency and severity of extreme weather patterns, storms, floods, droughts and water shortage. Climate change poses an immediate danger to the continuation of the way of life of the Indigenous Peoples of the arctic polar-regions who are watching their world melt before their eyes. Small Island communities are further threatened with becoming submerged by rising oceans.

Mr. Chair, we call to your attention the human rights implications concerning the legitimacy of the World Bank's Prototype Carbon Fund (PCF). The PCF is an instrument to commodify the atmosphere, promote privatization and concentrate resources in the hands of a few, taking away the rights of many to live with dignity. The PCF is not a mechanism for mitigating climate change. It legitimizes a market for an indefinable "commodity" which claims to consist of greenhouse gases or pollution, but in fact cannot be reliably described, quantified or verified. It is neither "carbon" nor pollution that is being traded, but people's lives and paper certificates claiming to be carbon credits. The carbon offset culture and emissions trading carries with it concerns of human rights violations.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.