

## **Twentieth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)**

19-30 April 2021, UN Headquarters New York, NY

Theme “Peace, justice and strong institutions: the role of Indigenous Peoples in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16”

Presented by Betty Lyons, Gaeñ hia uh, (Onondaga Nation, Haudenosaunee Confederacy) American Indian Law Alliance, Haudenosaunee External Relations Committee

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

### **Sustainable Development Goal 16**

Honorable Chair, Permanent Forum Members, Member States, PFII Secretariat's Office, Sisters and Brothers,

### **Our Responsibility to Mother Earth**

We the Haudenosaunee, along with all Indigenous peoples have a sacred relationship with and a mandate to speak for those things that can't speak for themselves. The laws we live by regarding Mother Earth have been handed down from time immemorial. These teachings are basic principles of respect, conservation and appreciation. We recognize other forms of life inhabiting the earth have a reason to be here just as much as we, each has duties that keep the rest of creation in a reciprocal balance. Humans are but a part of the natural world and Mother Earth is a relative, not a commodity. For this reason, we continue to operate under our traditional mandate to be stewards of the earth, and to preserve the land, water and our fellow creatures for the Seventh Generation in the future.

Indigenous Peoples understand that the laws of nature and the rights of Mother Earth supersede all other laws. We are experts on the territorial integrity and rights of Mother Earth as our unbroken relationship is reciprocal. Indigenous Peoples, equal, transparent participation in all fora concerning the United Nations Sustainable Development goals are integral to the success of this important work.

We acknowledge the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 22 December 2015 on Harmony with Nature, “Recognizing that a number of countries consider

Mother Earth the source of all life and nourishment and that these countries consider Mother Earth and humankind to be an indivisible, living community of interrelated and interdependent beings.”<sup>1</sup>

We are deeply concerned with the condition of Mother Earth’s fresh water lakes, rivers, streams, springs, tributaries and watersheds. These are most often historically significant and considered sacred sites to Indigenous Peoples and nations.

As we again come to these meetings for the twentieth Session of the UNPFII we are reminded of these words from Oren Lyons, “the ice is melting in the north and still we do nothing.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Recommendations:**

We recommend that working groups must include Indigenous Nations and peoples, member states, UN agencies and Non-government agencies to work on the many issues regarding climate change.

Indigenous Peoples must be recognized as experts in all areas concerning the status of Mother Earth. Indigenous Knowledge/worldview needs to be a significant part of programming, designing, studying and assessing the Sustainable Development Goals set forth by the United nations

We call on all member states to take action to implement and enforce the UNDRIP and assist in the cleanup of all sacred waters. All of humanity will stand to gain from it and could be used as a model of best practice within the UN fora and the world stage.

We affirm that member states, extractive industries, international industries, corporations and business enterprises, operating or seeking to operate in Indigenous territories, have the full free prior and informed consent of the particular Indigenous Nation and other provisions as provided for under UNDRIP Articles 8, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 32, and 37.

Member States implement effective measures to ensure that no storage or disposal of hazardous materials shall take place in the lands or territories of Indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.

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<sup>1</sup> See Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 22 December 2015 [on the report of the Second Committee (A/70/472/Add.7)] 70/208. “Harmony with Nature.” United Nations Document A/RES/ 70/208 Accessed [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/208](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/208)

<sup>2</sup> Lyons, Oren. "The Ice Is Melting in the North." *Manoa*, vol. 19 no. 2, 2007, p. 1-3. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/man.2008.0011.

Member States shall also take effective measures to ensure, as needed, that programmes for monitoring, maintaining and restoring the health of Indigenous peoples, as developed and implemented by the peoples affected by such materials, are duly implemented.

We reaffirm the need to have a full study on the impacts of the Doctrine of Discovery. Specifically it has had and continues to have influences over the practices of member states and climate change is the inevitable result of The Doctrine of Discovery.<sup>3</sup>

We also recognize the global threat of climate change and we affirm the recent fifth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) “Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change. Working Group III Contribution to the IPCC 5th Assessment Report - Changes to the underlying Scientific/Technical Assessment” (WGIII: 12<sup>th</sup>/Doc. 2a, Rev.2)

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<sup>3</sup> Doctrine of Discovery Working Group, <https://doctrineofdiscovery.org>