



NEWS RELEASE

May 17, 2011

International Indigenous Representatives gather for 10th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

United Nations Headquarters, New York, New York – More than one thousand indigenous representatives from around the world are in New York from May 16-27, 2011 for the 10th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). Grand Chief Edward John, of the First Nations Summit political executive, is attending his inaugural UNPFII session as the North American Representative to the UNPFII, a position to which he was recently appointed to for a three-year term (2011-2013).

The UNPFII is an advisory body to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, with a mandate to discuss indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights.

At the beginning of the 10th session of the UNPFII meetings, the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, providing an alarming statistic that one Indigenous language dies every two weeks.

"This information should give us all a pause to reflect. Canada's Prime Minister in his 2008 apology to Residential School survivors acknowledged the serious negative impact of residential schools on Indigenous languages in Canada. The federal government needs to act now by providing the necessary resources and work with Indigenous peoples to preserve our languages in this country. We must work together to reverse this disturbing trend", said Grand Chief Edward John.

Further information on the 10th session of the UNPFII is attached and can also be found at: www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/

-30-

The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

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Economic and Social Council
HR/5050

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Background Release

***Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to Review Progress, at Headquarters 16-27 May;
Implementation of Recommendations on Development, Environment, Consent to Be Focus***

More than 1,300 delegates are expected to attend the tenth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at Headquarters in New York from 16 to 27 May. This year's Permanent Forum will be especially significant, since it is a review year, which will focus on the implementation of Forum recommendations on economic and social development, the environment and free, prior and informed consent.

At its previous nine sessions, the Permanent Forum made 131 recommendations related to economic and social development, 127 on the environment and 35 related to free, prior and informed consent. The Forum has received appraisals on the implementation of about half of these recommendations.

The Permanent Forum will engage with Member States, United Nations agencies and civil society. Delegates will include the United Nations, intergovernmental organizations, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations, non-governmental organizations and academia.

During the second week of the session, the Permanent Forum will hold an in-depth dialogue with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to obtain a better understanding of its functions, and also to consider some of the challenges and opportunities faced by United Nations agencies in discharging their mandates, especially those related to indigenous peoples. The dialogue will include brief presentations from senior UNICEF officials, as well as regional coordinators.

The special regional focus of the Permanent Forum is on indigenous peoples of the Central and South America and the Caribbean region. Other special features include a discussion on the Permanent Forum's mission to Colombia, a half-day discussion on the right to water and indigenous peoples and discussions on studies completed this year by the Forum (during the second week of the session).

The Permanent Forum expects some 30 United Nations and other inter-governmental organizations and about 60 Governments to participate. The Secretary-General, the President of the Economic and Social Council, and the Under-Secretary for Economic and Social Affairs will attend the opening of the session.

Human Rights

The Forum has invited the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to have a dialogue during the first week. Members of Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Chairperson of the Forum will also participate.

Other highlights of the session include discussion on the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, during the second week of the session; discussion on the Rio+20 Conference, again during the second week of the session; and follow-up recommendations and action on the various studies that will be presented during the Forum.

Cultural Exhibition on Indigenous Peoples and Water

During the Permanent Forum session, there will be an indigenous exhibition at the United Nations, which aims to present the ways in which water is tied to indigenous peoples' spiritual, cultural, political and economic systems. The exhibition includes photographs from a number of internationally recognized artists, such as Wayne Quilliam, one of Australia's most respected indigenous photographers. Mr. Quilliam is the first indigenous photographer to be featured at the International Photo Biennale and has created and curated more than 100 exhibitions throughout the world. Other artists whose works will be on display include Ina Hume (Bangladesh), David Hernandez-Palmar (Venezuela), Brian Adams (United States), and Troy Donovan Hunter (Canada).

For journalists without United Nations press accreditation, please refer to the website of the Media and Accreditation Liaison Unit for details: <http://www.un.org/media/accreditation>, or call +1 212 963 6934.

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For a full schedule of side events, please see www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/Side_events_program_10session_Latest.doc.

For more information on the tenth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, please see www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/session_tenth.html.

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