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**REPORT OF THE
INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S
ENVIRONMENTAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH
SYMPOSIUM
JUNE 30 – JULY 1, 2010**

Submitted by the International Indian Treaty Council

**“DECLARATION FOR HEALTH, LIFE AND
DEFENSE OF OUR LANDS, RIGHTS AND
FUTURE GENERATIONS”**

Report of the
**INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS
WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL AND REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH SYMPOSIUM,**
June 30 – July 1, 2010

*Submitted February 22nd, 2011 as a Conference Room Paper for the
10th session of the United Nations Forum on Indigenous Issues by
the International Indian Treaty Council, Non Governmental
Organization in Special Consultative Status to the UN Economic and
Social Council*

**Agenda Item 3: Follow-up to the recommendations of the
Permanent Forum: (b) Environment; and
(c) Free, prior and informed consent.**



1. We, Indigenous women from North America, Latin America, the Arctic, Caribbean and the Pacific, gathered June 30th to July 1st, 2010 at the *International Indigenous Women's Environmental and Reproductive Health Symposium* in Alamo, California, hosted by the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), adopt by consensus the ***“DECLARATION FOR HEALTH, LIFE AND DEFENSE OF OUR LANDS, RIGHTS AND FUTURE GENERATIONS”***.
2. We have come together to share information about the negative impacts of mining and drilling, mercury contamination, nuclear and uranium testing, processing and storage, pesticides and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), military dumping, toxic waste incineration, desecration of sacred sites and places, introduction of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) and harvesting of our genetic materials. We have listened to each other's stories, and have also seen the tragic effects within our own families, communities and Nations of the environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts of toxic contamination.
3. These imposed, deplorable conditions violate the right to health and reproductive justice of Indigenous Peoples, and affect the lives, health and development of our unborn and young children. They violate our rights to subsistence, spiritual and cultural survival, self-determination and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

We recognize and affirm the following:

4. Indigenous women are life givers, life sustainers and culture holders. Our bodies are sacred places that must be protected, honored and kept free of harmful contaminants in order for the new generations of our Nations to be born strong and healthy.
5. Indigenous Peoples, and in particular women and children, are suffering the detrimental, devastating, multi-generational and deadly impacts of environmental toxins and contaminants that were unheard of in our communities prior to industrialization, including:
 - Contamination of mothers' breast milk at 4 to 12 times the levels found in the mother's body tissue in some Indigenous communities;
 - Elevated levels of contaminants such as POPs and heavy metals in infant cord blood; Disproportionate levels of reproductive system cancers of the breasts, ovaries, uterus, prostate and testicles, including in young people;

- Increasing numbers of miscarriages and stillbirths, and;
 - High levels of sterility and infertility in contaminated communities.
6. The knowledge to heal our Peoples is within our own Peoples. We know that our own healing knowledge and practices, passed down to us by our grandfathers and grandmothers, are essential for the healing of our Peoples and our Mother Earth.
 7. The protection of our health, lands, resources including air and water, languages, cultures, traditional foods and subsistence, sovereignty and self-determination, and the transmission of our traditional knowledge and teachings to our future generations are inherent and inalienable human rights. These rights are affirmed in the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and other international standards, and must be upheld, respected and fully implemented.
 8. Based on the above principles and values of shared agreement, we respectfully recommend the following actions:

Indigenous Peoples, Communities, Nations, Tribal Governments and Organizations:

9. We will work with our children, families, communities and Peoples, and the traditional knowledge holders of our Nations, to strengthen, restore and transmit traditional knowledge and practices, languages, health care, birthing, care of children and food gathering and planting processes. Our traditional knowledge as Indigenous women must be protected from all forms of exploitation and commercialization.
10. We encourage the development and dissemination of educational materials explaining the links between environmental toxics and reproductive health and justice. We also encourage the development of training programs to inform Indigenous women of opportunities for their participation locally, nationally and internationally, and to build their capacity as strong voices for their families and Nations.
11. We request that Indigenous Peoples and organizations carry out education and capacity building for Indigenous Peoples, including women, youth and tribal leaders, to enable them to use, apply and implement international standards including the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. In this way we can hold governments and

corporations accountable to a minimum standard for upholding our rights as Indigenous Peoples.

The United Nations System and International Bodies:

12. All international processes including those of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the current work of the UN Environmental Program for development of the globally-binding Treaty on Mercury, must use, apply implement the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the minimum standard. The full participation of Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous women, must also be formally and effectively implemented in these processes.
13. The United Nations Environment Program should establish a fund to specifically support the participation of Indigenous Peoples from impacted communities, in particular Indigenous women, in the current UN process of drafting and negotiating the Global Mercury Treaty.
- 14. The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples and other UN bodies and mechanisms addressing Indigenous Peoples' rights are urgently requested to focus attention and collect information from Indigenous Peoples on the links between environmental contamination and reproductive health and justice, for the purpose of recommending effective solutions and remedies at the international level.**

Corporations, Agencies and Institutions:

15. Corporations must fully disclose to all Indigenous tribes, communities, Peoples and individuals who may be affected by or exposed to pesticides, mining, dumping, incineration and other forms of toxic chemical production, the complete known or suspected affects of the chemicals in question, the location and names of corporations producing them, any current or prior legal sanctions or cases filed against them, the Indigenous Peoples in the same or other countries who have experiences with the given process or corporation, so that informed decisions can be made.
16. Any new activities which include the use of contaminants such as chemicals or GMO seeds and plants, must be subject to the "precautionary principle". The burden lies with

the government or corporation to prove that a process or chemical is safe and has no potential negative environmental, health or reproductive impacts **before** the process or chemical is used or produced.

17. We call for the development and implementation of standardized protocols and processes for collecting testimonies and information from Indigenous community members to protect privacy, confidentially and cultural knowledge, upholding their right of FPIC.
18. Regarding collection or testing of human tissues, including ancestral remains, all materials must be taken only with the FPIC and full involvement of the impacted Peoples and individuals. Test materials are the property of the subjects and must be returned to them, along with the results, when the agreed-upon tests or studies are completed.
19. As Indigenous Peoples, we require access to reliable independent laboratories to support community documentation of environmental toxins and their health effects

States and their Territories:

20. States and their Territories must be accountable for the implementation, with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples of all international Treaties, Standards and Conventions entered into including the Nation to Nation Treaties with Indigenous Peoples and Nations. Processes and mechanisms to ensure accountability must be put in place, with the full participation of affected Indigenous Peoples.
21. We reiterate the call for States and the corporations they license, to immediately halt the production and export of pesticides and other toxics that are banned for use in the country of origin and for other countries to refuse to import these substances.
22. Women, children and families who have suffered the impacts of toxic contaminates require special care. States and corporations which have allowed contamination to damage our communities must be held accountable to cover the costs and ensure that adequate care and services are provided, with the full participation and collaboration of the affected Indigenous Peoples.

Cross-Cutting:

23. We support a moratorium on fossil fuel exploration, processing, extraction, transportation, storage, and use and support previous moratoriums called for by

Indigenous Peoples as the first step towards the full phase-out of fossil fuels with a just transition to sustainable jobs, energy and environment and the protection of our peoples, homelands and ecosystems from the devastating impacts of climate change.

24. We call upon States and their Territories, agencies, national and international programs and institutions to immediately halt all collection of genetic materials in Indigenous communities, and return all genetic materials and samples to the communities from which they have been collected until all human, spiritual, cultural and health rights violations have been fully resolved to the satisfaction of the Indigenous Peoples involved, through the principle of FPIC.

In Conclusion:

25. Let us continue to work for all of the children of this world and for our generations still to come and to fulfill our responsibilities as culture holders. Our children have a right to be born healthy and to live in a clean environment. In order to heal our Peoples and Mother Earth, we have to continue to be who we are.

Excerpted from the Declaration adopted by consensus on July 1st, 2010.

For the entire text and the participants list in English:

<http://www.treatycouncil.org/PDF/DECLARATIONFORHEALTHREV1engweb.pdf>

En español:

<http://www.treatycouncil.org/PDF/DECLARACIONPARALASALUDweb.pdf>