

# INDIAN LAW RESOURCE CENTER

CENTRO DE RECURSOS JURÍDICOS PARA LOS PUEBLOS INDÍGENAS

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## UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 15<sup>th</sup> Session (9-20 May 2016)

Agenda Item 10: Future work of the Permanent Forum, including issues considered by the Economic and Social Council and emerging issues: Empowerment of indigenous women  
*(a) Sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women*

Statement on Behalf of the Indian Law Resource Center

May 18, 2016

International experts now recognize that violence against indigenous women is a serious human rights violation – a violation so significant it precludes their realization of all other human rights. Although the Permanent Forum has taken some important steps to address this global human rights crisis, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples demand intensified efforts by the UN system to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against indigenous women.

The UN Declaration provides minimum standards for the treatment of indigenous women and children. It calls on states, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to take measures to protect indigenous women and children against all forms of violence and discrimination. Implementation of the UN Declaration, especially Article 22, is essential at international and national levels. A new report by the United States Department of Justice finds that more than 4 in 5 American Indian and Alaska Native women in the United States have experienced violence and more than 1 in 2 have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.<sup>i</sup> Alaska Native women in particular report rates of domestic violence up to 10 times higher than in the rest of the country.<sup>ii</sup>

The World Conference on Indigenous Peoples was an historic achievement to advance the rights of indigenous peoples, and the Permanent Forum can make recommendations today that will help fulfill commitments won at the Conference. The Outcome Document includes an important commitment by the UN and member states “to support the empowerment of indigenous women” and to intensify efforts “to prevent and eliminate violence and discrimination . . . by strengthening legal, policy and institutional frameworks.”<sup>iii</sup> Toward that end, the Outcome Document invited action by the Commission on the Status of Women and the Human Rights Council. The Commission has since decided to designate empowerment of

indigenous women as a focus area at its sixty-first session in 2017 and the Council will hold a half-day panel on the issue of violence against indigenous women and girls in September 2016.

In order to fulfill commitments in the Outcome Document and to realize the rights recognized in the UN Declaration, we recommend that the Permanent Forum:

1. Urge the Commission on the Status of Women, when it addresses empowerment of indigenous women as a focus area at its sixty-first session in 2017, to ensure the selection of panelists and the preparation of issue papers are done in consultation with indigenous peoples and indigenous women's organizations. The panel should result in concrete recommendations for actions by the UN and states and be incorporated in the Commission's Agreed Conclusions or a resolution on the empowerment of indigenous women.
2. Urge the Secretary-General to issue a report with concrete recommendations for action to prevent and eliminate violence against indigenous women and girls, with a view toward enhancing existing special procedures of the Human Rights Council to respond to this cross-cutting issue, including by requesting regular joint reports from relevant special procedures.
3. Request the Secretary-General to convene a high-level panel on intensifying efforts, in collaboration with indigenous peoples, to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against indigenous women and girls, when the United Nations hosts its high-level event to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration in 2017.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>i</sup> Rosay, André, PhD, *National Institute of Justice Research Report: Violence Against Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men 2010 Findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*, p. 2 (May 2016) U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, available at: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249736.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> *A Roadmap for Making Native America Safer, A Report to the President and Congress of the United States*, Chapter 2, Reforming Justice for Alaska Natives, p. 41 (November 2013), available at: [http://www.aisc.ucla.edu/iloc/report/files/A\\_Roadmap\\_For\\_Making\\_Native\\_America\\_Safer-Full.pdf](http://www.aisc.ucla.edu/iloc/report/files/A_Roadmap_For_Making_Native_America_Safer-Full.pdf).

<sup>iii</sup> G.A. Res. 69/2, U.N. Doc. A/RES/69/2, ¶¶ 17, 18 (Sept. 25, 2014).