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Agenda 11: Follow-up to the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (b) enhanced participation indigenous peoples at the UN

Statement by Tebtebba, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact and the Asia Indigenous Peoples Caucus

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We wish to draw attention on the issue of enhanced participation of indigenous peoples in the UN system, particularly in relation to the selection and appointment of expert members of the Permanent Forum

As per ECOSOC resolution E/2000/22, which established the Permanent Forum, the President of the Council shall appoint eight of the 16 members of the Permanent Forum “following formal consultation with the Bureau and the regional groups through their coordinators, on the basis of broad consultations with indigenous organizations, taking into account the diversity and geographical distribution of the indigenous people of the world as well as the principles of transparency, representation and equal opportunity for all indigenous peoples, including internal processes, when appropriate, and local indigenous consultation processes...”

Indigenous peoples’ organizations in Asia have since then established a process of open and transparent consultation and selection for its nomination of expert member to the Permanent Forum based on agreed criteria and qualifications. In the past, the appointment by the ECOSOC president of the IP-nominated expert member had respected the result of this process. However, appointment process of the Asia indigenous nominated expert member for this term of the UNPF expert members is inconsistent with the said ECOSOC resolution. This is a bad precedent impacting on the integrity of the defined selection process of indigenous peoples in Asia which we have been upholding and practicing in the spirit of strengthening our cooperation and solidarity. It is also an affront to an indigenous-led and indigenous-defined process, and to the demand of indigenous peoples for their enhanced participation to the UN system. In this context, it will be extremely difficult for us to again undertake our own self-selection process for the next of indigenous-nominated set of expert members of the Permanent Forum if the ECOSOC will continue to ignore the result of this process. It should be noted that 187 organizations and 8 individual advocates from around the globe have endorsed the letter forwarded to the ECOSOC President regarding this matter.

We thereby raised our collective voice and call on the ECOSOC to ensure respect to the selection process of indigenous peoples, consistent with the ECOSOC resolution E/2000/22. Without this assurance, the integrity, credibility and independence of the Permanent Forum is seriously jeopardized. Further, this will also have serious implications in the current discussion on the enhanced participation of indigenous peoples in the UN system, of which, the respect for the self-selection of indigenous representatives shall be a fundamental principle. We strongly recommend the PF to transmit the position of indigenous peoples that the ECOSOC president should genuinely take into consideration the collective selection process of indigenous peoples in nominating indigenous representatives to UN bodies such as the Permanent Forum. Further, we also call on the Permanent Forum to bring this issue to the attention of the Under-Secretary General and to the Group of Advisers of the UNPGA in relation to the ongoing consultations on ways to enhance participation of indigenous peoples at the UN so that collective decision making processes of indigenous peoples are respected when enhancing representation and participation.