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**PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: SCIENCE AND
ENVIRONMENT**

**Written statement* submitted by the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), a non-
governmental organization in special consultative**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[7 February 2006]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The Natural World and the food security, cultural integrity, health and well being of Indigenous Peoples is profoundly threatened by the rampant use and proliferation of genetic modification technologies affecting food and other plants, animals and human beings. These technologies are being developed and used by scientific and academic institutions, in many instances with funding provided by States, as well as by multi-national corporations with no regard for the human rights of the Indigenous Peoples whose lives, ecosystems, traditional foods or cultural survival they are affecting, or for the fundamental principle of free, prior informed consent.

Over 650 Indigenous participants from North, Central, South America and the Pacific attended the 31st Anniversary International Indian Treaty Council Conference hosted by the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations at Ermineskin Cree Nation, Alberta Canada, from August 3 – 7, 2005. At that time they adopted by consensus the following resolutions addressing the threats to the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of “Genetic Use Restricted Technologies (GURTs)” as well as the “Genographic Project”, and voicing their clear and unanimous opposition:

Resolution Urging the Prohibition of Release of Genetic Use Restriction Technologies (“GURTs”)

Bearing in mind that Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge, innovations and practices have developed and nurtured plant species for agriculture and medicinal uses for millennia, contributing to both biological and cultural diversity; and

Bearing in mind that Indigenous Peoples depend on the sharing and exchange of saved seeds for their livelihoods; and

Bearing in mind that the productivity and fertility of seeds is the basis for the on-going sustenance, livelihoods, and cultural life-ways of Indigenous Peoples; and

Affirming by virtue of their human right of self-determination, Indigenous Peoples have the right to food sovereignty and food security; and

Taking note that Genetic Use Restriction Technologies (GURTs), also known as “Terminator Technology,” refers to plants that have been genetically modified to render sterile seeds at harvest, thereby preventing the practice of seed saving and threatening food sovereignty and food security; and

Reminded that the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) decided in their sixth meeting (Paragraph 21 of decision VI/5) to establish an Ad Hoc Technical Experts Group (AHTEG) to address the potential impacts of GURTs on smallholder farmers, indigenous and local communities and farmers; and

Taking note that the AHTEG found that the potential negative affects of GURTS require the ongoing implementation of the precautionary principle to insure that the rights, safety and food security of Indigenous and local communities are not threatened; and

Taking note that the AHTEG report found that GURTs has many possible negative impacts on Indigenous peoples, which include the potential to:

- 1) Reduce and limit traditional seed exchange practices;
- 2) Reduce the knowledge and local innovation capacity of local and indigenous communities for crop improvement, threatening local food security;
- 3) Precipitate the loss of local knowledge, reduce or negatively affect local agrobiodiversity, and result in a deterioration of indigenous knowledge systems;
- 4) Displace traditional farming systems and the social, cultural and spiritual dimensions associated with them;
- 5) Cause seed dependency or crop failure through the potential misuse of unintentional use of GURTs seeds;
- 6) Negatively and irreversibly create changes in the environment caused by gene flow or other problems with environmental containment; and,
- 7) Facilitate the appropriation of some elements of indigenous traditional knowledge and genetic resources in a permanent and irreversible manner.

Recognizing that any field testing or any commercial use or other release of GURTs is a fundamental violation of the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, a breach of our right of self-determination, and a threat to our rights of food sovereignty and food security;

Considering that the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) of the CBD will further consider the social, economic, and cultural impacts of GURTs on Indigenous Peoples at its 4th meeting on January 23-27, 2006 in Grenada, Spain;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT

The International Indian Treaty Council calls upon the WG8J to advise the Eighth meeting of Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP8) that GURTs is a dangerous technology that threatens biodiversity, Indigenous knowledge systems, small holder farmers and global food security;

The International Indian Treaty Council calls upon CBD COP8 to fully consider the AHTEG Report on GURTs, and approve the Report's recommendation that governments develop national regulations to prohibit commercialization of GURTs;

In light of the continued lack of data on the potential negative impacts on Indigenous and local communities and Farmers' Rights and in line with the precautionary approach, International Indian Treaty Council will advocate that the COP8 should not approve GURTs for field-testing and commercial use and reaffirm paragraph 23 of its decision V/5; and

The International Indian Treaty Council will continue to advocate that the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the CBD Secretariat must ensure the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in all future processes of the CBD related to GURTs; and

The International Indian Treaty Council will support Indigenous Peoples' efforts to develop and disseminate educational materials about GURTs and its cultural, social and economic impacts on Indigenous Peoples.

Adopted by consensus, August 7, 2005

Resolution Calling for a Halt to The Genographic Project

WHEREAS, the Genographic Project is a five-year, \$40 million project of the National Geographic Society, IBM Corporation, and Waitt Family Foundation launched on April 13, 2005 to collect, analyze and store 100,000 DNA samples of Indigenous Peoples worldwide “to study human origins and migrations”; and

GREATLY CONCERNED that the Genographic Project also intends to analyze “ancient DNA” derived from the bodies of our deceased ancestors; and

NOTING the Genographic Project also seeks to collect oral histories of Indigenous Peoples to be compiled in the Genographic Database, which will be proprietary to National Geographic Society; and

FURTHER NOTING the Genographic Project plans to conduct research at 10 international research centers, which may impact up to 1,000 Indigenous Nations worldwide; and

CONCERNED that the Genographic Project has failed to initiate a process of formal consultations with the respective governments of the potentially affected Indigenous Nations; and

NOTING that the University of Pennsylvania Social and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board has approved the Genographic Project’s North America Protocol, giving the Genographic Project the authority to proceed in North America; and

AFFIRMING that it is unethical to proceed with human population genetic research on Indigenous Peoples because the risks to these Peoples far outweighs any potential benefits; and

RECOGNIZING that Indigenous Peoples have extensive traditional knowledge and oral histories about our own origins, which are central to our spiritual and cultural identity and are valid on their own right and do not need western scientific validation; and

TAKING NOTE that the Genographic Project admits that some of the findings that result from their research may contradict an oral, written or other tradition held by Indigenous Peoples about their own origins; and

NOTING that findings of genetic research are always speculative but nevertheless may be misused by governments to undermine Indigenous Peoples’ rights as the original inhabitants of our territories; and

AFFIRMING that Indigenous Peoples have the right and obligation to protect and perpetuate our own historical and cultural knowledge; and

AFFIRMING that Indigenous Peoples have the right to protect the remains our ancestors from destructive analysis; and

AFFIRMING that Indigenous Peoples have the right to protect our genetic material and oral histories from appropriation or analysis by western scientists; and

AFFIRMING that consistent with the right of self-determination and free prior informed consent, Indigenous Nations have the right to refuse to participate in the Genographic Project.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, THAT;

THE INTERNATIONAL INDIAN TREATY COUNCIL and its affiliates call upon the National Geographic Society to halt the Genographic Project and all its activities and aims; and

THE INTERNATIONAL INDIAN TREATY COUNCIL encourages Indigenous Peoples to prohibit activities related to the Genographic Project to be conducted within their territories, including any collection of blood, other biological samples and oral histories; and

THE INTERNATIONAL INDIAN TREATY COUNCIL calls upon our friends and allies to boycott the products and services of the National Geographic Society, the IBM Corporation, and Gateway Computer until the Genographic Project is halted.

Adopted by Consensus August 7, 2005
