

International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change
Statement at Closing Plenary of UNFCCC COP21
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Aanii, Nakwegeshik N'diznikas. Pipigwa Ododem. Waganakising n'doonjibaa. (Hello. Noonday is my name. The Sparrow Hawk is the mark of my family. I am from the Land of the Crooked Tree.)

Mr President, I greeted you in my native language. My name is Frank Ettawageshik and I represent the National Congress of American Indians. Thank you for this opportunity to address you on behalf of the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change. Indigenous Peoples are those who least contribute to climate change, having safeguarded our traditional lands, territories and resources for millennia. Because our lives are inextricably and intimately related to the natural world, every adverse effect on that world acutely affects our lives.

The members of our caucus come from all the regions of the world. Indigenous peoples came here with three key messages. We are pleased that during these negotiations all of our points were addressed to some degree.

1. It is essential that the rights of indigenous peoples be recognized, protected and respected within a broad human rights framework. We sought such assurance in the operative section of the Agreement. We are keenly disappointed that the Parties did not see fit to accommodate this request in which we joined with a broad constituency. The Parties do recognize the importance of such rights in the Preamble and we intend to insist on our rights at every turn. We are sovereign governments with international treaties and rights to land territories, and resources toward which we have a sacred duty which we intend to fulfill.

2. A temperature goal of no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. We are disappointed this was not adopted as the Structured Expert Dialog stated that our traditional livelihoods will be severely affected at two degrees. However, we are thankful that the vital importance of achieving the 1.5 degree Celsius goal is recognized in the agreement language.

3. Recognition, respect for, and use of our traditional knowledge, with our free, prior, and informed consent. We appreciate that a provision appears in the operative section under adaptation, but it should apply everywhere in the Agreement and Decision without the qualification "where appropriate".

We must remember we are here as nations to uphold the future for our children! We recognize the hope in all children's eyes and we work so that this hope will remain through the future generations.

Miigwetch (Thank You), Merci Beaucoup