

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 18th Session, 22 April – 3 May, 2019
Agenda Item 3: Follow up to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum
International Indian Treaty Council statement presented by Vice Chairman Peter Yucupicio,
Pascua Yaqui Tribe

Thank you, Madame Chair. We thank the UN Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and waste, Mr. Baskut Tuncak, for his historic legal review of the UN Rotterdam Convention based on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the UN Conventions on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Rights of the Child as recommended by the Permanent Forum's 16th session.

We appreciate the opportunities in the last year for Indigenous women, families and Peoples around the world to share their personal experiences and community-based studies about the impacts of pesticides and other environmental toxics on their reproductive and inter-generational health. This includes the Expert Group Meeting held in Mexico City January 19- 20 this year organized by IITC, CADPI and FILAC.

The Rapporteur's legal review represents a significant advance in implementing the recommendations of the Forum. We appreciate his statement to the Forum last year which contained the following recognition: ***"...Indigenous peoples such as the Yaqui have suffered grave adverse impacts on their health and dignity from the ongoing use of highly hazardous pesticides. These pesticides are often imported from countries that have banned their use domestically because of uncontrollable and unreasonable risks."***

The IITC first brought this issue to the attention of the international community almost 20 years ago. Unfortunately, this legal review was initiated only after many Yaqui children already suffered and died. It is heartbreaking to the Yaqui Nation that even as this legal review progressed, in the last year at least 4 more children in the Yaqui Pueblos of Sonora Mexico died as a result of the continued use of banned and highly toxic pesticides. One was Angel Agustin Valdez who died on December 31, 2018 after suffering the entire 3 years of his life with leukemia, which he had since birth due to prenatal exposure.

To date, IITC has worked in Yaqui communities to collect over 120 testimonies documenting serious illnesses, birth defects and deaths, including over 40 children. We know that many other Indigenous Peoples are also affected. We look forward to continued attention resulting in real international policy change so that our children's lives and health can be protected.

Cheoque Utesia.
