



Press Release

Indigenous Leaders to Provide Plan of Action to 5th Summit of the Americas

Panama City, Panama (April 17, 2009) – Indigenous leaders from across the Americas met April 14-15, 2009 in Panama City, Panama to take part in the 3rd Indigenous Leaders Summit of the Americas (3rd ILSA). The meeting provided an opportunity for Indigenous leaders to conduct discussions on issues related to the work of the Organization of American States (OAS) and, particularly, the work to be conducted during the 5th Summit of the Americas to take place in Trinidad and Tobago, April 17-19, 2009. The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) co-hosted the event with the assistance of the OAS and various Indigenous organizations throughout the Americas.

During the meeting a Declaration and a Plan of Action were developed to promote the aspirations of Indigenous Peoples and to outline actions necessary to accomplish these goals. As noted by NWAC President Beverley Jacobs, “The [3rd ILSA] Plan of Action provides achievable actions for states to undertake in order to ensure that Indigenous Peoples’ rights are implemented in their respective countries. The goal of ensuring that our human rights are respected and protected can only be achieved if nation states commit to take action.”

The Plan of Action outlines key activities for states to ensure the implementation of Indigenous rights related to six areas to be deliberated during the 5th Summit of the Americas. A delegation of 10 Indigenous leaders will attend the 5th Summit of the Americas, including NWAC President Jacobs and, on behalf of the AFN, Grand Chief Edward John. The delegation will meet with OAS State Ministers and will bring forward the 3rd ILSA Declaration and Plan of Action at a meeting on April 17th, 2009 leading into the 5th Summit of the Americas.

“The Plan of Action is the key component of our message to the State Ministers of the OAS and it is my hope that these leaders will take our recommendations back to their respective states and promote their implementation,” said Grand Chief Edward John, “Implementation of our human rights is one crucial step toward alleviating the human rights violations that we face.”

The ILSA take place every four years. Other items discussed during the two days included: the full implementation of the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, environment and resource management, intellectual property, culture and heritage, and sustainable human development, economic empowerment and trade.

The Native Women's Association of Canada is an aggregate of 13 native women's organizations and is the national voice of Aboriginal women in Canada.

The Assembly of First Nations is the national organization representing First Nations in Canada.

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