APPENDIX 6

BEIJING DECLARATION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

One of the most active and effective groups at the Women’s NGO Forum were the indigenous women. They organized activities such as workshops and cultural events in the indigenous Women’s Tent. After many days of discussion, they also issued a Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women which comprehensively sets out the major global and national causes of their plight. The Declaration, signed by 118 indigenous groups from 27 Southern and Northern countries, is published below.

1. THE Earth is our mother. From her we get our life, and our ability to live. It is our responsibility to care for our mother and in caring for our mother, we care for ourselves. Women, all females, are the manifestation of Mother Earth in human form.

2. We, the daughters of Mother Earth, the indigenous women present at the NGO Forum of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, have come together to collectively decide what we can do to bring about a world which we would like our children and our children’s children to live in. We acknowledge and build upon earlier declarations which evolved from earlier meetings and conferences, like the 1990 Declaration of the Second International Indigenous Women’s Conference, the Kari-Oca Declaration of 1992, and those of various regional conferences of indigenous women, and the consultations and conferences done in preparation for this Beijing conference.

3. This declaration is drafted in recognition of the existence of the UN Declaration of the International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples, the Draft Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Cairo Declaration, and the Copenhagen Social Summit Declaration.
While we agree with most of the provisions of ILO Convention 169, we cannot fully endorse a Convention which remains silent on the use of nation-states of military force to remove indigenous peoples from their lands.

4. We stand in unity behind this ‘1995 Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women’ which is the fruit of our collective efforts to understand the world and our situation as indigenous women, critique the Draft Platform for Action, and articulate our demands to the international community, the governments, and the NGOs.

5. We, the women of the original peoples of the world, have struggled actively to defend our rights to self-determination and to our territories which have been invaded and colonised by powerful nations and interests. We have been and are continuing to suffer from multiple oppression; as indigenous peoples, as citizens of colonised and neo-colonial countries, as women, and as members of the poorer classes of society. In spite of this, we have been and continue to protect, transmit, and develop our indigenous cosmovision, our science and technologies, our arts and culture, and our indigenous socio-political and economic systems, which are in harmony with the natural laws of Mother Earth. We still retain the ethical and aesthetic values, the knowledge and philspirituality, which conserves and nurtures Mother Earth. We are persisting in our struggles for self-determination and for our rights to our territories. This has been shown in our tenacity and capacity to withstand and survive the colonisation happening in our lands in the last 500 years.

6. The ‘New World Order’ which is engineered by those who have abused and raped Mother Earth, colonised, marginalised, and discriminated against us, is being imposed on us viciously. This is recolonisation coming under the name of globalisation and trade liberalisation. The forces behind this are the rich industrialised nation-states, their transnational corporations, financial institutions which they control like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). They will cooperate and compete among themselves to the last frontiers of the world’s natural resources located in our lands and waters.

7. The Final Agreement of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the establishment of the WTO has created new instruments for the appropriation and privatisation of our community intellectual rights through