



International Indian Treaty Council

2940 16th Street, Suite 305,
San Francisco, CA 94103-3664
Telephone: (415) 641-4482, Fax: (415) 641-1298
www.treatycouncil.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Roberto Borrero, IITC Communications Coordinator, Roberto@treatycouncil.org

THE INTERNATIONAL INDIAN TREATY COUNCIL (IITC) ATTENDS THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD TO ADDRESS MEXICO'S LACK OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONVENTION

Geneva Switzerland, May 19, 2015: An IITC delegation is currently attending the 69th session of United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to address violations of the rights of Yaqui children in Sonora Mexico caused by the use of highly restricted and banned pesticides. The CRC, the treaty monitoring body for United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, will review the compliance of Mexico as a State Party on May 19 and 20, and will issue its final observations and recommendations by the end of the current session on June 5, 2015.

The violations presented by IITC focus on Mexico's import and use of pesticides and other agro-chemicals which have been banned, unregistered or highly restricted in the United States, the European Union and other exporting countries due to their well-known deadly health impacts. These include reproductive abnormalities, childhood cancers and severe birth defects. Since 2001, IITC has worked with Yaqui community members and the Yaqui Traditional Authorities to collect over 80 testimonies documenting disease, disabilities, injuries and over 25 deaths tied to pesticide exposure. IITC's written submission to the CRC includes 39 testimonies specific to children and mothers.

Article 24 of the *Convention* calls for the highest attainable standard of health for children including "through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, **taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution.**" CRC General Comment 11 addressed the rights of Indigenous children under the *Convention* (2009) and "urges States parties to adopt a rights-based approach based on the Convention and other relevant international standards, such as ILO Convention No. 169 and the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*". IITC's submission calls attention to Article 29 of the UN *Declaration* which stipulates that States shall "take effective measures to ensure that no storage or disposal of hazardous materials shall take place in the lands or territories of Indigenous Peoples without their Free Prior and Informed Consent" and ensure the implementation of "programmes for monitoring, maintaining and restoring the health" of the affected Indigenous Peoples.

IITC's delegation includes IITC Executive Director Andrea Carmen, Francisco Villegas Paredes and traditional midwife Aurelia Espinoza Buitimea, all from the Yaqui Nation. Mr. Villegas and Mrs. Espinoza are members of the community organization *Jittoa Bat Nataka Weria* based in Vicam, Rio Yaqui, one of the most affected communities in the region.

"We are seeing increased birth defects, leukemia and other cancers in young children. Many babies don't survive more than a few hours or days. Medical doctors and our healers and midwives confirm that the cause is storage and application of highly toxic pesticides near our homes, schools and communities, many of which we know are banned for use in the US and other countries. When the airplanes spray overhead there is no control of who is exposed. Yaqui workers are not provided with protective gear, places to wash or warnings about the dangers, and they in turn expose their families when their clothes become soaked with pesticides," explains Mr. Villegas Paredes. "The Mexican Government is informed by law of the dangers when they import these toxic pesticides. They have an obligation to protect our children from exposure and to provide treatment, medical care and compensation to those who have already been affected."

IITC's full submission can be downloaded from the CRC web page: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CRC/Shared%20Documents/MEX/INT_CRC_NGO_MEX_20330_E.pdf. The CRC's concluding observations addressing Mexico's report will also be posted on the CRC web page once they are finalized.

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The International Indian Treaty Council is an organization of Indigenous Peoples from North, Central, South America, the Arctic, Pacific and Caribbean in General Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.