

Session Report Cover Sheet

SESSION CODE: CULT – 05	
Name of Convener(s): UNESCO/Water Academy, France/Japan Center for Areas Studies – National Museum of Ethnology	
DATE: Monday Monday, 17 March, 2003 (180')	Session Title: Indigenous Water Vision and Rights: A New Perspective for Better Water Management
Contact information in Japan	Accommodation: Kyoto International Conference Hall, Room B1 14:00 – 17:00
	Contact No.: 075-222-1300
	Contact E-mail: alberto@treatycouncil.org

Session Report

SESSION CODE: CULT - 05

Reporter/Rapporteur: Alberto Saldamando

Contact E-mail : alberto@treatycouncil.org

1. Key Issues

1. The central and primordial role of water in the spiritual and physical relationship of Indigenous Peoples to the Earth, and the integration of that relationship into cultural practices in the management, use and conservation of water;
2. The importance of traditional water management and use in the production of means of subsistence as well as to the maintenance and reproduction of Indigenous Peoples Identity as a collective, and their cultures, languages, religion;
3. Indigenous Peoples' systems of the millennia of water management and use based upon principles and practices that balance immediate needs with the needs of the environment and other living things, plants and animals as well as other people, and the sustainability of future generations.
4. The negative impacts of expropriation by governments and the privatization of water sources and resources and their debilitating and deadly effects on the physical existence as well as the cultures and identity of Indigenous Peoples.
5. The negative consequences of global warming and climate change on the physical existence and cultures now being particularly felt by desert Indigenous Peoples.
6. An Indigenous ethic of respect and reverence for water as life and life giving.

7. Actions

1. The promotion of respect and observance of Indigenous Peoples' human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the right of Self Determination and the free use and control of their lands and territories, necessary for the use and conservation of water and of water sources and resources.
2. The endorsement of: the UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity; the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development's recognition of the vital role of Indigenous Peoples in sustainable development; and, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol;
3. Condemnation of water practices and policies that disrupt, diminish or obliterate Indigenous Peoples' relationship to the Earth and its water, including expropriation,

privatization of water sources and resources, and a call for the active protection of water and related traditional knowledge as an integral part of physical and cultural survival.

4. The global public demonstration of deep concern over the imposition of untried and many times deadly water management and practices based upon untried science, such as genetically modified plants in the imposition of industrialized agriculture, that actually diminish water resources and lead to the removal of Indigenous Peoples from their traditional lands and cultures.

5. A call for the use of the Earth Charter's precautionary principle and the free and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples before development projects and practices that affect water are implemented.

8. Commitments

Indigenous participants committed to the establishment of a global Indigenous Working Group to facilitate linkages between Indigenous Peoples themselves all over the world and between Indigenous Peoples and international organs, such as UNESCO that may be interested in their plight, as well as to serve as a source of technical and legal support for Indigenous Peoples on water and water related issues.

9. Recommendations

1. That this Forum recognize the importance and value of cultural diversity and the impact of international as well as national water policies and actions on that diversity;

2. That this Forum further recognize the significant contributions of Indigenous Peoples and cultures to this diversity.

3. That this Forum also recognize and demonstrate support the critical importance of an ethical framework for water policy and use, an ethical framework based upon respect for life giving water and its cultural manifestations, an ethical framework that includes an affirmation of respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples, their water and water sources and the dignity and worth of their cultures.

Quotes from the workshop:

"Water is life. Whoever can privatize water can privatize life." Issyad AG KATO, Indigenous presenter from Niger.