

NATIVE AMERICANS ATTEND THE UN NEGOTIATIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN HAGUE

PRESS RELEASE

14 November 2000

Hague, Holland – Five delegates representing tribes and native non-governmental organizations from the United States are participating in parallel meetings at the United Nations negotiations on climate change and global warming. Around 160 countries are expected in The Hague, Holland for two weeks of talks to finalize the Kyoto Protocol, the world's only agreement containing legally-binding limits on emissions of global warming gases from industrialized countries.

“We are there to demand a process be established within the UN convention for the creation of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples to discuss and have input in these climate issues that threatens the survival of our world,” says Tom Goldtooth, director of the Indigenous Environmental Network, one of the groups responsible for the participation of the delegation on native issues. “Our native communities, especially the villages of the Arctic regions and those communities in the lower 48 that practice subsistence culture and lifestyle are disproportionately affected by climate change and global warming,” said Goldtooth.

Participating in the global warming negotiations are Sarah James, from Arctic Village, Alaska; Sterling Gologergen, from Savoonga village, Alaska; Marilyn Goodhope, from Shishmaref village, Alaska; Robert Gough, representing the Intertribal Council on Utility Policy of South Dakota; and Shelly Means, with the Seattle Interfaith Global Climate Change Campaign.

“The ice is thinning and our way of life is being threatened”, says Sterling Gologergen, who works for Alaska Community Action on Toxics in Anchorage. IEN has reports of the Bering Glacier thinning and retreating, the forests of the Kenai Peninsula being destroyed by insect infestation brought about by temperature increases and soil erosion in Alaska villages. “Soil erosion is something our people have never seen in their lifetime,” says Art Ivanoff, environmental director at the Native Village of Unalakleet, who was scheduled to go to The Hague, but weather conditions prevented his travel.

The US delegation will be meeting with near fifty other indigenous peoples worldwide as part of a parallel meeting slated as the 2nd Forum of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities on Climate Change. Amazon Alliance for Indigenous and Traditional Peoples of the Amazon Basin, International Indian Treaty Council and International Alliance for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests are some international indigenous organizations in attendance.

For further information:

Tom Goldtooth, Indigenous Environmental Network, (218) 751-4967 (US)
Antonio Gonzales, International Indian Treaty Council, (415) 641-4482 (US)
Rebel Owens, Amazon Alliance, 011 33 66 354 8184 (Den Haag)

INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK – PO BOX 485 – BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA 56619 USA
TEL: (218) 751-4967 FAX: (218) 751-0561 EMAIL: ien@igc.org WEB: www.ienearth.org