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UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR SUPPORTS INDIGENOUS NATIONS IN CANADA AS THE DENE NATION CALLS FOR CHARGES FOR EXXON- IMPERIAL OIL LTD. KEARL MINE TAILINGS PONDS LEAKS AND SPILLS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[May 8, 2023, Denendeh]- The Dene Nation appreciates the United Nations Special Rapporteur's comments at the twenty-second session of the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues *at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 17-28 April 2023.*

"It is disappointing that not only are our Treaty lands, waters, birds, animals and families being poisoned by tar sand developments in Alberta, but we practically have to beg to be engaged by Industry and the governments of Alberta and Canada. Dene had to ask to present to the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development on the Imperial Oil tailings breach in Alberta when Canada should have invited us as downstream peoples endangered by bad industry science. It is shameful to Alberta and Canada that the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights had to lobby internationally on our behalf to have Alberta and Canada engage Dene," said Dene National Chief Gerald Antoine.

The Dene National Chief also said, "We are also extremely disappointed that Canada and the Alberta Government have not halted all operations at the site and laid charges against Imperial Oil after clearly knowing for the last 2 and half months of the extent of this horrendous environmental disaster."

Special Rapporteur Cali- Tzay's comments stated, "...It has come to my attention that the environmentally dangerous spill from May 2022 was not reported until recently. Moreover, in February 2023, an additional spill occurred, releasing 5.3 million litres of toxic wastewater onto Treaty 8 territory, encompassing the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (Chief Allan Adam) and other Treaty 8 Chiefs and territories.

These tailings ponds persist in leaking, affecting downstream regions in the Mackenzie Basin and Treaty 11 territory, which includes the Arctic of the Dene Nation (National Chief Gerald Antoine), eventually discharging into the Arctic Ocean."

During the U.N. Special Rapporteur's visit to Canada, spanning ten days, he expressed concerns regarding the significant violations of Indigenous Peoples' human rights regarding their land rights, health, and overall welfare. He implored the Canadian Government to engage in discussions with Indigenous Peoples to confront these urgent matters.

He strongly advises that public regulators and Exxon Mobile, the international corporation influencing the Arctic in Canada, abstain from infringing on Indigenous Peoples' human rights. "It is essential for these organizations to implement human rights due diligence procedures, to identify, avert, to mitigate, and rectify any real or potential impacts on the human rights of Indigenous Peoples."

Cali-Tzay's final comments were to "recommend the United Nations system to persist in working on its action plan E/C.19/2016/5,17, in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and the State concerned, concentrating on prevention and protection. I also recommend the U.N. assist the State in implementing the recommendations made in this report and other United Nations mechanisms. I am dedicated to collaborating with Indigenous Peoples and all stakeholders to address these pressing concerns and to advocate for the human rights and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples while facing these challenges."

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