

Interactive dialogue 5: Water Action Decade: accelerating the implementation of the objectives of the Decade, including through the United Nations Secretary-General's Plan: Water Action Decade 2018–2028

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Your excellencies, Indigenous dignitaries, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen;

Tansi and good afternoon - my name is Kyle Vermette and I am here representing the Manitoba Métis Federation, the National Government of the Red River Métis - one of the three indigenous peoples in Canada.

I wanted to reiterate and clarify three points in the concept paper, and seek support for the following recommendations:

First, Indigenous peoples are not simply vulnerable populations subjected to the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, and the water crisis as noted in paragraph 32. We are the solution. Indigenous knowledge, when shared in a way that respects our rights, is not rudimentary or outdated but rather an ancient and sophisticated technology system rooted in sustainability and utility.

Second - if member states recommend the distinctions-based involvement of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledge directly in decision-making and governance, as suggested in paragraph 61, including in transboundary water agreements, in the work of a special envoy, or any future water-related multilateral mechanisms, you will see the transformational change being sought at this conference.

Third, paragraph 23 notes that investments and funding must be mobilized specifically for Indigenous peoples. If member states and the private sector invest directly in Indigenous peoples, you will solve more than just concerns respecting water. The Government of Canada has invested in the Red River Métis, as partners, respecting nature, climate change, and water, and together we are seeing a positive return on investment and, importantly, quantifiably improved environmental outcomes.

There is more for each of us to do, but let us commit to continue to navigate our responsibilities to water with equity, respect, and - importantly - to navigate the path together.

Thank you.