**Agenda Item #7 – International Decade of Indigenous Languages**

**Delivered by Chief Francis Laceese on behalf of the Tŝilhqot’in Nation:**

[*Greeting in Tŝilhqot’in*]

I am Chief Francis Laceese from the Tŝilhqot’in Nation and I speak our Tŝilhqot’in language

In its 2012 Report on Indigenous Languages the Expert Mechanism was correct to say that Indigenous languages are a necessary part of Indigenous self-determination. Our language is how we understand our Nenqay (our lands, water & resources). Our language carries our knowledge and our laws.

We endured multi-generational efforts by Canada to strip us of our language and cultural in residential schools. In these, so-called schools, Children were taken from their parents and punished for speaking our Indigenous languages. This is recent history; I attended a residential school for 10 years.

We are working hard to maintain our language. We have a Tŝilhqot’in Radio station that has programming in our language. We are working on restoring Tŝilhqot’in place names in our territory. Thankfully, we have many active language learners. I speak to my grandchildren in Tŝilhqot’in – they understand me.

These efforts require lots of community resources and political cooperation.

For the decade of Indigenous Language to be a success, States need to step up and help, especially those that sought to silence Indigenous languages. Success requires funding and resources. It requires political cooperation –including ensuring that Indigenous peoples have jurisdiction over language education in their territories.

I will close in my language:

*[Tŝilhqot’in closing]*

Sechanalyagh (thank you)