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National Action Plan Will Not End Genocide of Indigenous Women and Girls

Ottawa, ON – The National Action Plan on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is not an adequate response to the crisis of murders and disappearances, and the ongoing genocide against Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people that was identified by the National Inquiry. This is the conclusion of a number of Indigenous women experts, grassroots groups and organizations who work with Indigenous families, survivors and communities. They have grave concerns about the immediate health, safety and well-being of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls issued 231 Calls for Justice to be included in a National Action Plan to end genocide that would be grounded in Canada's domestic and international human rights and Indigenous rights obligations. Co-ordination across jurisdictions was understood by the Inquiry to be a critical part of any Plan moving forward.

The Plan entitled: 2021 National Action Plan: Ending Violence against Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People, drafted by a working group of selected Indigenous organizations and government officials, sets out a vision, goals, and immediate next steps. This plan does not answer how to keep Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people safe, with no specific information about how, when and by whom concrete actions will be taken. Nowhere in the document do governments acknowledge and accept responsibility for the laws, policies, and practices that contribute to, and perpetuate, the ongoing genocide of Indigenous peoples, and specifically of Indigenous women, girls 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

Indigenous women, communities, families, survivors, experts and allies have worked for decades to shine a light on this crisis and demand accountability for the murders and disappearances by governments and institutions. There would never have been a National Inquiry were it not for their determined advocacy. Canada's failure to create a proper plan to end genocide does not fall on those groups who provided input into the plan.

This comes at a specifically difficult time for many Indigenous women and families who are also residential school survivors. The discovery of the mass grave of 215 children represents an incomprehensible trauma to the Secwépemc peoples, survivors and communities across the country who have long known about other unmarked and mass graves. This is why Canada was found guilty of historic and ongoing genocide of Indigenous peoples that has led to high rates of violence against Indigenous women and girls today. This is yet another reason why Canada must take concrete steps to end the genocide and all forms of harm.

The document released today is extremely disappointing because it does not provide the comprehensive, system-wide, inter-governmental plan that is needed to end genocide. There is no commitment for urgent emergency services to prevent the abuse, exploitation, disappearances and murders of Indigenous women and girls; nor is there a monitoring mechanism - independent of the government of Canada - to monitor the urgent end to genocide.

“With this document, Canada has once again dismissed the stories and voices of thousands of Indigenous women, survivors, and families and shown its willingness to be complicit as we continue to go missing and be murdered. We call for immediate action and full implementation of the Calls for Justice and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.” Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs

“Considering that there is no coordination between the different levels of government, we ask ourselves what is the use of this work?” Viviane Michel, President, Quebec Native Women

“The Nation-to-Nation process continues to marginalize and alienate Indigenous women and the representatives of their choice from substantive legal, policy and economic decision-making and governance over their own lives.” Dr. Dawn Lavell-Harvard, President, Ontario Native Women’s Association

“The Plan failed to include the expedited registration of First Nations women and their descendants who are now entitled to Indian status because of recent amendments to the Indian Act. This is an urgent priority since the sex discrimination in the Indian Act has been one of Canada's most effective tools of assimilation, and it is long past time to restore First Nations women to their rightful place in their communities and nations.” Sharon McIvor, Feminist Alliance for International Action

“I am pleased to see that intersectionality was included as a guiding principle in the Plan and that it recognizes the higher rates of victimization for Indigenous women and girls who have disabilities; but I don’t see a plan address this lived reality.” Dr. Lynn Gehl

“This is not a national action plan. A national action plan defines concrete actions that will be taken and assigns responsibility, resources and timelines for implementing them. This ‘Plan’ does none of that.” Shelagh Day, Chair, Human Rights Committee, Feminist Alliance for International Action

“Canada is a state perpetrator of genocide which specifically targets Indigenous women and girls for violence, exploitation, dispossession and oppression. Its failure to accept full responsibility for genocide and outline a plan to end it on an urgent, national basis puts the lives of Indigenous women and girls at grave risk.” Dr. Pamela Palmater, Chair in Indigenous Governance, Ryerson University

Indigenous women, in collaboration with communities, families, survivors, advocates and allies, will continue to push Canada to take urgent action and be accountable to end genocide.

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