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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 21, 2008

The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission Hosts Orientation on Human Rights for the 21st Navajo Nation Council

Window Rock, Ariz. – The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission (NNHRC) held a two-day orientation session on human rights for the 21st Navajo Nation Council last Thursday and Friday in Window Rock, Ariz.

Despite inclement weather Thursday morning, Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan, over 30 council delegates and individuals from the general public filed into the Navajo Nation Museum Auditorium to hear presentations made by an elite group of speakers and the NNHRC staff.

NNHRC Executive Director Leonard Gorman emphasized the orientation theme, ‘Human Rights for Future Generations,’ when he gave recommendations on addressing Navajo human rights to the Council.

Gorman advised that the Navajo government address such issues as anti-discrimination legislation, the creation of a Legal Assistance Enterprise Fund, legislation that defines Dine Human Rights and the Navajo Nation’s intolerance to violations of Dine Human Rights and to engage border-towns through the use of purchase orders.

“The Navajo Nation Council may want to consider adopting anti-discrimination legislation that clearly prohibits discrimination and clearly demonstrates that the Navajo Nation does not tolerate racial discrimination on Navajo lands,” Gorman said.

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The 2005-2006 Navajo Comprehensive Economic Strategy Plan shows Dine people and the Navajo Nation government spend an estimated \$260 million in the border-towns on an annual basis.

“Former Flagstaff City Mayor pointed out that 90% of the city’s retail economy comes from Dine,” Gorman said. “Nine out of 10 vehicles purchased are bought by Dine.”

The Commission’s stance proposes the Navajo government revise its terms and conditions on the reverse side of its purchase orders, thereby compelling private border-town businesses who accept its purchase orders, to abide by Navajo preference in employment act.

On the International level, the NNHRC recommended the Navajo Nations participation in the 2010 United Nations (UN) Human Rights Councils review of the United States performance on human rights. The UN recently instituted a requirement that all 192 members are to be reviewed for their implementation of UN declarations, covenants and conventions.

Other speakers included UN Special Rapporteur S. James Anaya, Navajo Activist Grace S. Yellowhammer and Former Regional Director for the United States Commission on Civil Rights John F. Dulles, who shared statistics he gathered while working on the 2005 Farmington Report, a report documenting the state-of-affairs between Navajos and non-Navajos in Farmington over the last 30 years.

“The U.S. Department of Justice reports that American Indians face violent crime at a rate twice that for African Americans,” Dulles said. “70% of these crimes are perpetrated by non-Indians.”

Robert T. Coulter, Founder and Executive Director of the Indian Law Resource Center, a non-profit law and advocacy organization located both in Montana and Washington D.C., introduced using international law in protecting human rights.

Coulter said, “Human rights are things that individual persons need to protect, what the Navajo Nation needs to protect, at home. They aren’t just things we talk about in Washington, DC or in Geneva, Switzerland, they’re things to be protected by all individuals.”

The NNHRC is preparing to host the North American Indigenous Caucus in March. The staff will be inviting land-based tribes from across the United States to attend.

For more information about the NNHRC contact public information officer Sheree Peshlakai at (928)871-7436 or view our website at www.nnhrc.navajo.org.

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