
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on the Promotion and
Protection of Human Rights
Working Group on Indigenous Peoples
Twentieth Session
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Agenda Item 6
Standard-setting Activities

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Statement by Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA)

Thank you, Mr Chairman

We would like to express again, at this session of the Working Group, our sincere belief that the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples can and should be endorsed in its present form, without further delay.

It is our hope that the declaration will be passed in time to give due commemoration to the end of the International Decade on Indigenous Peoples.

It is justified to bring attention to the reluctance on the part of some of the states to cooperate in the preparation of an international standard.

It is therefore important to remind the state representatives of our original goal and original zeal to formulate and conclude a declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Mr Chairman, it is pleasing to note that the concern about collective rights was overcome in the last session of the Working Group on the Declaration.

I recall that the Chairman of the Working Group concluded that there was acceptance from all speakers of the concept of collective rights.

Because of this progress, at the next session we will again address the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination.

The declaration can not be an aspirational document, to which Indigenous Peoples can turn, without the inclusion of the unqualified right to self-determination.

Mr Chairman, we can see that there are changes in the international relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the nation-States.

We must keep that mood - for change, for improvements, for progress - going at the international level.

It is a fundamental truth that we are here, and we are pursuing a human rights standard for Indigenous Peoples, because the human rights of Indigenous Peoples are grossly violated throughout the world.

The violations arise out of domination and power over the Indigenous Peoples.

History tells us the disadvantage cannot be remedied without recognition and acknowledgement of the rights of peoples to self-determination.

Those states, that have domestic fears of Indigenous Peoples rights, must take off their blindfolds in these international forums.

States should not remain silently opposed, but must move towards an international position in agreement with other States and with the Indigenous Peoples.

We therefore urge, Mr Chairman, that all participants in the next Working Group on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples prepare to commit at that session to the best outcome on the right of self-determination.

Finally, Mr Chairman, we will remind all participants here that we must move, in this new millennium, forward, onwards from the setting of international standards on human rights and towards the implementation of the standards.

The World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban last year, remains as the most important test on the implementation of standards, as they must apply equally Indigenous Peoples.

We look forward, in the future sessions of the WGIP, the Sub-Commission and the Commission on Human Rights, to the states' confirmation of their plans of action to eliminate racial discrimination against Indigenous Peoples.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.