

AFRICANS DENY INUIT AND SAAMI HUMAN RIGHTS

PRESS STATEMENT
OF THE
INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL AND SAAMI COUNCIL
(Arctic Caucus)
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Today African states should be ashamed of their contribution to one of the worst days in human rights history. Today, African states displayed the fact that they could not accept a human rights instrument that is fair, balanced and consistent with international law and its progressive development in the specific context of the world's Indigenous Peoples. They did so by advancing a "no action" motion in the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, which was considering the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Rather than support its adoption, African states, on a procedural matter, voted in favor of a delay purportedly for dialogue. For this reason, the Inuit Circumpolar Council and Saami Council are outraged by the open politicization of this important UN human rights instrument.

On the purported basis that some of the African states did not had ample time to consider the import of the Declaration, today's action essentially derails the Declaration and fully rejects over 20 years of State and Indigenous Peoples work at the UN. It is ironic that the African states took such an action in light of the aim of the Declaration: to elaborate the fundamental human rights of the most politically, economically, socially and culturally marginalized peoples in the world – Indigenous peoples.

The Inuit Circumpolar Council and Saami Council know that the African states were not acting alone in this mission. We know that they were aided and abetted by the deceitful work of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States – each of whom have been subjects of early warning/urgent action measures or alarming concluding observations by the UN treaty bodies in direct relation to Indigenous human rights.

Furthermore, this decision is a huge insult to the newly established Human Rights Council and the supposed UN reform of its human rights pillar. The resolution was an outright rejection of the one of the Council's first recommendations. Though Indigenous peoples have been told that they have a home at the UN, Secretary General Kofi Annan's own fellow nation-state members could not bring themselves to support the basic human rights of Indigenous peoples.

The Inuit Circumpolar Council and Saami Council are aware that any further action will likely lead us away from the unprecedented consensus language reflected in the Declaration. The world community must recognize that the burden is now upon the African states concerned and whether or not they will put their money where their mouths are. Finally, despite this setback, the Inuit and Saami remain vigilant in the promotion and protection of our human rights.

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