

**United Nations
Working Group on Indigenous Populations
XXII Session
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**Intervention by the Delegation of BRAZIL
Dr. Mercio Gomes, President of FUNAI
(National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples)**

**Agenda item 4(a) General debate
19 July 2004**

I would like to congratulate all participants of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations: representatives of Indigenous peoples, governments, NGOs and the experts of the Sub-Commission.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the support of the Government of Brazil to the mandate of this Working Group, which is an important forum for Indigenous peoples within the United Nations system.

A brief overview of the situation of Indigenous peoples in Brazil shows a steady progress as regards recognition and demarcation of Indigenous lands. Brazil is a South American country with a territory of more than 8,5 million square kilometers. Our population is 170 million people. In this territory 220 different Indigenous groups live, which amount to 410 thousand people or about 0,2% of the general population. Of those 220 ethnic groups, 180 speak their own languages.

The 1988 Constitution of Brazil recognizes original rights of Indigenous peoples over their lands. Indigenous peoples are part of the Brazilian nation, but they have the right to keep their cultures and to receive bilingual education.

The current Administration established as its main goal to conclude the demarcation of all Indigenous lands by the year 2006. There are 600 Indigenous lands of which 450 have been demarcated and fully guaranteed to Indigenous peoples. We estimate that about 1,100 million square kilometers or 12 % of the Brazilian territory will be Indigenous lands. The largest Indigenous lands are located in the Brazilian Amazon but Indigenous peoples live in all regions of Brazil.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has recently promulgated the 169 ILO Convention on Indigenous rights. We feel that the recognition of the Convention is an important step for any country to recognize Indigenous rights and to formulate their own policies. We are planning to organize a National Conference for Indigenous Peoples, so that all Indigenous peoples have the opportunity to discuss their common problems and come up with common solutions that might be made effective as public policies. We also intend to move forward to elaborate a new Indigenous National Law ("Estatuto do Índio") to replace the present one that was created 30 years ago.

To sum up, there is a serious public policy in place to recognize and promote indigenous rights in Brazil. Finally, I am pleased to present this Working Group with a map of Brazil that contains all Indigenous lands.

Government