

Statement of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, James Anaya

**Human Rights Council
Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

Opening meeting

11 July 2011

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished members of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,
Delegates of Member States,
Representatives of indigenous peoples and organizations,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am grateful to once again have the opportunity to address the Expert Mechanism and all those attending this session. Let me start by congratulating the new members of the Expert Mechanism, and by congratulating you, Mr. Chairperson, on your election. Your appointment to the Expert Mechanism comes at a historic time during which indigenous peoples have been able to draw ever-greater attention to their concerns at the international level.

I would also like to congratulate the outgoing members of the Expert Mechanism for their contributions to the beginning work of this body and to laying the foundations for its future activities. This work is helping to develop expert thinking around the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and practical guidance for its implementation. The studies that have been completed on indigenous education and indigenous participation in decision-making provide useful analysis and information, and help clarify aspects of these important issues. I look forward to the Expert Mechanism's future work exploring and provide advice on other core issues of concern to indigenous peoples. I hope that, as part of this work, the Expert Mechanism will continue to provide practical orientation on ways to address the problems that indigenous peoples face on a day-to-day basis, including through the examination of good practices and case studies.

The thematic studies and advice of the Expert Mechanism are valuable complements to the work of the other two United Nations mechanisms with specific mandates concerning indigenous peoples—that is, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the mandate of Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, which is the mandate I am privileged to hold. I look forward to continuing our discussions and to hearing from indigenous peoples and others about ways in which the three mechanisms can enhance our cooperation and effectiveness.

Mr Chairperson,

Allow me at this regard to say a few words about my own mandate as Special Rapporteur. The mandate conferred upon me by the Human Rights Council calls upon me to advance the rights of indigenous peoples through various means, including by promoting good practices, examining country situations and responding to information of alleged violations of the rights of indigenous peoples. In doing so, I welcome written information from indigenous peoples and other sources, and I frequently engage directly with States through written communications and meetings here in Geneva or New York to discuss concerns that have been brought to my attention. I also conduct country visits to gain first hand knowledge and report on situations and cases. My work as Special Rapporteur examining country situations and specific cases has led me to identify issues of common concern to indigenous peoples around the world, and I have addressed these issues through my own thematic studies that draw from the work on country situations and cases. I believe I have been able to develop these thematic studies in a way that is complimentary to the work of the Expert Mechanism, and I look forward to exploring ways in which I can better coordinate my thematic work with that of the Expert Mechanism.

Mr. Chairperson,

As in the past, during this session of the Expert Mechanism I will be holding parallel meetings with representatives of indigenous peoples and organizations about specific cases. I am grateful to the Expert Mechanism and its Secretariat for its assistance in facilitating these meetings, holding these meetings at the annual sessions of Expert Mechanism, I believe, is an important component of the cooperation between our respective mandates which we have already established. These meetings are good opportunities for me to hear directly from indigenous peoples and organizations about matters of concern to them, and to begin or further the process in appropriate cases of taking action.

However, I would like to remind indigenous peoples and organizations that, even without face-to-face meetings or country visits, I routinely consider and in many cases act upon the information that is submitted to me in writing. Detailed information about how to submit information to me is provided at the web sites maintained by both the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and my support team at the University of Arizona. These web sites can easily be found by entering my name and the words "Special Rapporteur" into any web-based search engine.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to conclude these brief remarks by expressing my gratitude for the opportunity to participate in this session of the Expert Mechanism. I look forward to addressing the distinguished members of the Expert Mechanism again later this week during the specific agenda items regarding the right of indigenous peoples to participate in decision-making and on the Declaration. As always, I am committed to cooperating with the Expert Mechanism in the shared pursuit of promoting and securing the full enjoyment of the rights of indigenous peoples.

Thank you for your kind attention.