

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT OF THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES ON THE



RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The Indigenous People's Preparatory Meeting held from July 27th to July 31, 1987 has given renewed consideration to the Declaration of Principles which was prepared and submitted by the Indigenous People's Preparatory Meeting of 1985. The Declaration was prepared and approved by a consensus of all the indigenous representatives participating in the 1985 meeting and was signed by representatives of more than 17 indigenous people's organizations.

The participants in this year's Preparatory Meeting have added two new principles to the Declaration and have made a few minor amendments and corrections to the 1985 draft. The two new principles cover the right to be free from military conscription and the rights relating to health, social services and housing.

With these additions and amendments, the Declaration has again been approved and reaffirmed by the consensus of the participants in the Indigenous People's Preparatory Meeting. The Declaration is again submitted to the Working Group for its consideration.

This year many indigenous leaders and representatives attended the Preparatory Meeting who had not previously attended. This Declaration now represents the views and consensus of a larger and growing group of representatives from throughout the world.

In submitting this Declaration we want to call attention to the fact that this expression of fundamental rights and freedoms has evolved from more than ten years of deliberation and drafting by indigenous people. Our first Declaration in this generation was adopted at the NGO Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas - 1977, held here at the Palais de Nations. Since then many other drafts have been prepared which have made important contributions to this most recent and comprehensive Declaration.

We will, no doubt, continue our work of refining and developing these principles. This is not a static document. We want to have the views and concerns of those indigenous people who's voices have not yet been heard -

WGIP 87/UN/16

those who will bring their ideas and concerns to future meetings.

We want to call particular attention to the need for dialogue between the Working Group and the indigenous participants about these principles.

We are disappointed that we have received no reaction, no comment, no criticism.

- not even any questions about this important submission. We have given detailed consideration to the draft principles prepared by the Working Group, and we believe that an exchange of views and an on-going discussion of ideas is the only way to develop a useful declaration. It is, to say the least, difficult to contribute productively to the Working Group's efforts if we do not have some sort of dialogue - some sort of two-way exchange of ideas, questions and concerns.

Our efforts will be more valuable to the Working Group if we have a full and frank response from members of the Working Group. We need to have a fair idea of the views of the Working Group. We believe that the members of the Working Group and the world at large will increasingly understand and agree with our concerns and aspirations if we can have a dialogue.

In regard to the draft principles prepared by the Working Group, we ask that the Working Group reconsider and compare our Declaration of Principles to those drafted by the Working Group. We ask that the Working Group take into account our 22 principles and review, amend and add to the seven principles, taking into account our Declaration.

We hope that our submissions and contributions this year will be useful to the Working Group. We also hope that this submission will be reflected in the draft principles of the Working Group and annexed to the Working Group's Report.

I will now read the Declaration of Principles: