

**Human Rights Council
WG Institutional Construction
Annual Working Programme
Geneva 23rd April 2007**

Mr. Facilitator:

Good morning. In the template, proposed for the Human Rights Council annual working programme it is suggested that the human rights of specific peoples, groups and individuals be dealt with in the second session, during four weeks, in the months of September - October.

Our commission was very happy that this segment foresees the treatment of the topic of Indigenous peoples as a priority and we hope that when it comes time for the Human Rights Council preparatory committee to approve the annual working programme, this priority will be confirmed.

This priority placement of the topic "Indigenous peoples" is consistent with the initiative that this session's Indigenous delegates, those from the working group on mechanism revision, have supported, which specifies the establishment of a group of experts on Indigenous Peoples' human rights.

The agenda of the Human Rights Council should be directed by the principles of constructive dialogue, objectivity and comprehensive inclusion. This justifies the creation of a group of Indigenous experts that will replace and continue the work initiated 24 years ago by a working group on Indigenous Populations. This proposed organ will submit reports directly to the Human Rights Council, without having to consult the general advisory body of the Human Rights Council. In fact, given the diversity and the importance of the serious situations that Indigenous peoples around the world face today, reporting on the valuable work of the group of Indigenous experts should have an entire day or more allocated to it.

We also have to keep in mind that Indigenous issues are crosscutting: these peoples suffer from poverty with specific characteristics. In many cases they are deprived of their rights to food, health, access to livelihood and adequate education. When they try to claim their rights, they become victims of torture, arbitrary executions, forced displacement, plundering of their natural resources and other abuses, which are in some cases classified as genocide. They are victimized through multinational companies large scale business ventures and by state programs.

Their remoteness from the Headquarters of the United Nations prevents them from being able to turn to Convention Committees. That is to say they suffer from being limited in how they can seek help from the international human rights services. That is why the Council can compensate for this deficiency by granting them as large a space as possible in Council sessions.

Thank you, Mr. Facilitator

Tomás Alarcón
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