



**WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS**

**THIRTEENTH SESSION**

**GENEVA 24-28 JULY 1995**

**ITEM 4: STANDARD SETTING**

**STATEMENT BY THE  
NEW ZEALAND OBSERVER DELEGATION**

*Check Against Delivery*

## ITEM 4: STANDARD SETTING ACTIVITIES

### DRAFT STATEMENT BY NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT OBSERVER DELEGATION

Tihei Mauriora

I should like to greet Madame Daes and the other members of the Working Group, indigenous representatives, Government delegates and representatives of non-governmental and inter-governmental organisations attending this thirteenth session of the Working Group.

New Zealand is pleased again to attend the Working Group's annual session, which assumes particular significance in this the first year of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

The Working Group has played a significant and vital part over the last eight years in developing the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

It is an achievement to have reached this stage in the evolution of this new human rights instrument.

We welcome the decision taken by the Commission on Human Rights at its meeting in February to establish an open-ended inter-governmental working group as the next stage in the development of an appropriate draft Declaration for consideration and adoption by Governments within the Decade. Governments now need to maintain the momentum developed by this Group and build on its work, using the draft as the basis for the elaboration of a Declaration containing an internationally endorsed statement of rights to which all indigenous people are entitled.

There can be no argument that indigenous people have the right to exist as distinct communities with their own cultural identities within their countries, that their

relationship with the land is special and must be taken into account by those who arrived after them, and that they must be involved in determining their own economic and social destiny.

This Declaration needs therefore to give recognition to the specific needs and perspectives of indigenous people and to the importance of ensuring that they have the freedom and security to maintain their own identities, cultures and ways of living.

For indigenous people occupy a special position within their countries. The purpose of the draft Declaration is to take account of that special position and to define and provide appropriate recognition and protection for their rights as indigenous people.

We are confident that the draft Declaration developed by the Working Group on Indigenous Populations will be given serious and considered appraisal by all Governments.

But while it is Governments who have finally to accept the Declaration, they are as all of us know only part of the equation. For this is a document about the rights of indigenous people. It is therefore integral to the nature of the document that indigenous people should have the opportunity to continue to be heard as Governments consider the draft. For this reason, we welcome the decision reached by the Commission on Human Rights to establish a mechanism for authorisation of representation by indigenous organisations at the new inter-governmental Working Group as it works through the draft Declaration.

We urge indigenous people wishing to have their views heard to apply for authorisation to participate and to do so expeditiously so that their applications can be processed in advance of the first meeting of the Working Group.

We note the value of indigenous organisations authorised to participate working together within constituencies so as to facilitate progress in consideration of the draft.

The Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations, which New Zealand has been contributing to, has provided a valuable source of funding to assist those indigenous people least able to do so to attend meetings of WGIP. This has enabled a wider range of indigenous people to be involved in the work of WGIP, make contacts with other indigenous groups and become more aware of the perspectives of others.

Given the importance of the work of the new inter-governmental Working Group and the mechanism for continuing involvement by indigenous organisations, we agree with suggestions that consideration be given to broadening the terms of reference of this Fund so that it might also be accessed by indigenous organisations for assistance toward their participation in sessions of the new Working Group .

By way of conclusion, we consider that WGIP has played a very important role in the development of standards relating to indigenous people. There may be new areas where the Group could wish to consider further work.

In looking at the ongoing role of WGIP in relation to other United Nations bodies, including the new inter-governmental Working Group on the draft Declaration, it will be important to ensure that WGIP does not duplicate work being done elsewhere.

While doing this, we recognise that WGIP can continue to serve as a special forum at which a broad range of indigenous people and Governments are able to exchange views across a wide range of issues affecting indigenous people.

We look forward to this meeting as a further opportunity for such an exchange across the range of agenda issues before us.

Thank you