



AUSTRALIA

**UNITED NATIONS WORKING GROUP ON
INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS
13TH SESSION
24-28 JULY 1995**

**STATEMENT BY MR DAMIR IVKOVIC
ON BEHALF OF THE AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION**

ITEM 7: INTERNATIONAL DECADE

GENEVA

28 JULY 1995

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

MADAME CHAIRMAN

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE. THE THEME FOR THE DECADE, "PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION", REFLECTS THE NEED FOR GOVERNMENTS TO ADDRESS IN A PRACTICAL WAY THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. THE THEME ALSO INDICATES CLEARLY THAT THE PROGRAM OF ACTION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE MUST BE IMPLEMENTED WITH FULL CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE MUST BE AN EQUAL PARTNERSHIP.

THE DECADE MUST PRODUCE GOOD, PRACTICAL RESULTS IN KEY AREAS OF CONCERN TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. A MAJOR OBJECTIVE OF THE DECADE SHOULD BE THE ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. ANOTHER OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE THE SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF THE QUESTION OF A PERMANENT FORUM WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM.

THE REVISED DRAFT PROGRAM OF ACTION PRODUCED BY THE TECHNICAL MEETING PROVIDES A GOOD BASIS ON WHICH TO PROCEED. ACHIEVING GOOD OUTCOMES FROM THE PROGRAM OF ACTION WILL DEPEND IN PARTICULAR ON EFFECTIVE CO-ORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE UN SYSTEM, WITH MAXIMUM INPUT FROM INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WILL HAVE A CENTRAL ROLE TO PLAY DURING THE DECADE. AUSTRALIA URGES THAT THE INDIGENOUS UNIT WITHIN THE CENTRE BE GIVEN, AS A MATTER OF HIGH PRIORITY, THE RESOURCES NECESSARY TO ENABLE IT TO DO AN EFFECTIVE JOB IN CO-ORDINATING ACTIVITIES FOR THE DECADE. THIS UNIT SHOULD UTILISE THE SKILLS OF QUALIFIED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE.

IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE DECADE THAT UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES DEVELOP COMPREHENSIVE AND CO-ORDINATED PROGRAMS IN CONSULTATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES TO ADDRESS THEIR NEEDS. STAFF ACTING AS FOCAL POINTS FOR THE DECADE WITHIN THE AGENCIES SHOULD BE SUITABLY SENIOR, AND MUST HAVE ADEQUATE SUPPORT AND RESOURCES. AGENCIES SHOULD CONSIDER APPOINTING INDIGENOUS EXPERTS TO THESE IMPORTANT POSITIONS WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

THE PROGRAM OF ACTION MUST BE IMPLEMENTED WITH A COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE. ONGOING MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE PROGRAM WILL BE ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE THAT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD ARE BENEFITING FROM THE PROGRAM IN PRACTICAL WAYS. IT WILL BE VITAL TO ENSURE THAT THE VOLUNTARY FUND FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE IS AN EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENT. THE DECADE CO-ORDINATOR WILL NEED TO MAKE MAXIMUM USE OF A WIDE RANGE OF SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR THE FUND, INCLUDING GOVERNMENTS, THE PRIVATE SECTOR, FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS, ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS AND THE MEDIA. IN PARTICULAR, SUPPORT FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR SHOULD BE EXPLORED ENERGETICALLY. IT IS WORTH RECALLING IN THIS REGARD THAT THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION THE PRIVATE SECTOR COULD MAKE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUMMIT'S PLAN OF ACTION.

MUCH OF THE SUCCESS OF THE DECADE WILL DEPEND ON THE ACTIONS OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS. THE REALISATION OF THE ASPIRATIONS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WILL REQUIRE POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL COMMITMENT BY GOVERNMENTS. BRINGING ABOUT IMPROVEMENTS IN THE DAY TO DAY LIVES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WILL REQUIRE PARTNERSHIP AT THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS. IT WILL REQUIRE THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF APPROPRIATE LEGISLATION AND THE

CONSCIENTIOUS IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATIVE AND PRACTICAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS. MOST IMPORTANTLY, IT WILL REQUIRE A CONCEPTUAL SHIFT FROM A WELFARE-BASED APPROACH TO ONE GROUNDED IN A RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, BOTH THEIR INDIVIDUAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND THEIR COLLECTIVE RIGHTS AS INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

IN AUSTRALIA, THE PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE DECADE WILL BE DEVELOPED AND ORGANISED BY THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMISSION. AS THE PEAK NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ORGANISATION, ATSIC HAS ESTABLISHED A NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE DECADE. I SHALL LEAVE IT TO MY DISTINGUISHED COLLEAGUE FROM ATSIC TO PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION ON THE COMMITTEE'S ACTIVITIES.

MADAME CHAIRMAN

A SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL DECADE WILL MAKE A REAL AND LASTING CONTRIBUTION TO THE LIVES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES BY BRINGING ABOUT CONCRETE IMPROVEMENTS TO THEIR ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND TO THEIR ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SITUATIONS. IT WILL EDUCATE AND SENSITISE GOVERNMENTS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE TO THE CONCERNS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. IN SHORT, IT WILL HELP TO BRING THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OUT OF THE SHADOWS OF OPPRESSION AND MARGINALISATION. THAT IS A GOAL WE MUST ALL STRIVE TO ACHIEVE.

THANK YOU, MADAME CHAIRMAN