



# 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 8: THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE WORKING GROUP**

**GENEVA**

**28 JULY 1995**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

MADAME CHAIRMAN

AUSTRALIA SEES THE WORKING GROUP AS HAVING A CONTINUING AND IMPORTANT ROLE. THE WGIP PERFORMS A VALUABLE FUNCTION AS THE ONLY FORUM IN WHICH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CAN FREELY RAISE THEIR CONCERNS.

THE TWO CENTRAL ACTIVITIES MANDATED TO THE WORKING GROUP REMAIN RELEVANT AND, INDEED, MIGHT USEFULLY BE EXPANDED. THE REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS PROVIDES THE EXPERT MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP WITH A WEALTH OF INFORMATION FROM INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND GOVERNMENTS ON HOW THEY ASSESS THE SITUATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. THERE IS MERIT IN OUR CHAIRPERSON'S PROPOSAL THAT THE WORKING GROUP PREPARE A MORE FOCUSSED REPORT ON ITS SESSIONS AND CIRCULATE IT WIDELY AS AN INFORMATION AND RESOURCE DOCUMENT.

THE STANDARD-SETTING ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP COULD ALSO BE USEFULLY BROADENED TO REALISE THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THE MANDATE. THE DIRECTION SUCH AN EXPANSION OF ACTIVITIES MIGHT TAKE WAS DETAILED IN THE AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION'S STATEMENT UNDER ITEM FOUR. I WISH TO RESTATE HERE AUSTRALIA'S SUPPORT FOR PROPOSALS ON NEW STANDARD-SETTING ACTIVITIES MADE DURING THE CURRENT SESSION BY SEVERAL INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATIVES, INCLUDING THE ELABORATION OF INSTRUMENTS FOR THE PROTECTION OF INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL PROPERTY, THE PROTECTION OF INDIGENOUS WORKERS AND PRISONERS, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CONVENTION BASED ON THE DRAFT DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

OPEN AND FLEXIBLE ACCESS FOR INDIGENOUS NGO'S IS A DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC OF THE WORKING GROUP AND A KEY REASON FOR ITS RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE. TO BUILD ON THIS, THE AUSTRALIAN

DELEGATION ENCOURAGES THE WORKING GROUP TO SCHEDULE FUTURE MEETINGS IN REGIONAL UN CENTRES. THIS WOULD BRING THE WORKING GROUP CLOSER TO ITS CONSTITUENTS. IT WOULD ASSIST BOTH THE WORKING GROUP AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, MANY OF WHOM ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE OPERATIONS OF THE UN SYSTEM, TO BETTER UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.

THE WORKING GROUP COULD TASK THE SECRETARIAT TO PREPARE A STATEMENT OF THE COST IMPLICATIONS AND MODALITIES OF SUCH A STEP. THE WORKING GROUP, AT ITS NEXT SESSION, COULD CONSIDER THIS INFORMATION WITH A VIEW TO HOLDING A MEETING IN A REGIONAL UN CENTRE, SUCH AS SANTIAGO, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 1997.

THANK YOU MADAME CHAIRMAN