



# CORE Centre for Organisation Research & Education

Indigenous Peoples' Centre for Policy and Human Rights in India's North East

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Sub-Commission on the Promotion and  
Protection of Human Rights  
Working Group on Indigenous Populations  
Twenty-fourth session  
Geneva, 31 July to 4 August 2006

CORE

STATEMENT ON  
Agenda Item 6: Other Matters  
(b) Cooperation with other United Nations bodies

**"LAI LOISANPHM KHNGBA TAABANEE"**  
**(Know how to complete the task)**

1. The Working Group on Indigenous Populations debated and considered the situation of indigenous children and youth as its principle theme of the eighteenth session in 2000. The examination of the critical plight of indigenous children and youth worldwide touched upon issues of, inter alia, poverty, health, wellbeing, survival, suicide, substance abuse, education, housing, land, family environment, administration of justice, effects of armed conflict, labour, displacement and legislation, policies and implementation mechanisms including the vital issue of participation.
2. Our responsibilities include the critical issue of the rights of indigenous children and youth. The eighteenth session was highlighted by the participation of the Rapporteur member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the treaty monitoring organisation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. During his intervention in the debate, he emphasised the strength of the convention to protect and promote the rights of indigenous children, while urging the government of the United States of America to ratify the convention. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child conducted a General Discussion Day on the rights of indigenous children in September, 2003. Following from this discussion, the Committee is now engaged in an ongoing work to develop a General Comment on the Convention on the Rights of the Child that will elaborate and interpret the Convention's provisions vis-à-vis the specific context of group rights as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples now presented to the UN General Assembly for adoption.
3. The WGIP, as we recall, focused on the rights of the indigenous children as a specific area of its interest. As an organisation with a special mandate for standard setting activities, the WGIP, as an experts' body, is requested to continue this focus of interest and cooperate closely with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its endeavour to elaborate an appropriate General Comment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
4. With the elaboration of this General Comment, State Parties to the convention will be obliged to provide specific information regarding the implementation of this universally ratified treaty referring to the protection and promotion of indigenous children living within their territories.

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5. Another positive development from the debate of the eighteenth session of WGIP is the attention that has been accorded to the situation of indigenous children by UNICEF. In 2003, UNICEF published its 11<sup>th</sup> *Innocenti* Digest, "Ensuring the Rights of Indigenous Children". The central message of this document, which encapsulates the UN Child Rights organisation's policy regarding indigenous children, was that "successful and sustainable initiatives for indigenous children...are most likely to be founded upon a human rights approach that is, by definition, intercultural and incorporates indigenous worldviews."

6. UNICEF's contribution and experience to the advancement of indigenous children's rights are needed so that a robust and accountable mechanism is developed to give concrete the aims of the UN's Second Decade on the World's Indigenous Peoples.

7. The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has also adopted an ongoing focus on the situation of indigenous children and youth since its second session. The participation of indigenous children and youth, the inclusion of their voices in the endeavours of the UN requires careful and sensitive facilitation, especially in the context of the developing understanding on free and prior informed consent, conflict prevention and resolution, and natural heritage.

8. The WGIP is also requested to

a. Make a strong plea to the government of the United States of America to ratify this convention, as the plight of the Native American children and youth have been demonstrated time and again to be extremely critical.

b. The accountability of the US government to the international community must be extended beyond the Americas.

c. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has a substantial number of vacancies emerging due to the retirement of some of its members. It would be most effective if the new Committee, following the procedure set in the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues sets aside 2 seats for indigenous experts, including one indigenous youth (i.e. below 25 years of age). The youth member may be construed as an additional advisory member to the Committee.