

Statement by the observer delegation of Bangladesh under agenda item 7  
[13th Session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations].

Mr. Chairman,

We have examined the Report of the Technical Meeting on the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People contained in document E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1995/5. We have the following observations :

- i) Paragraph 5 refers to certain NGOs in consultative states with ECOSOC as 'indigenous' organisations. Whatever the unofficial disposition of certain individuals, clearly there is no such official category in the ECOSOC, and official documents should not use an arbitrary category.
- ii) Paragraph 6 of the report again uses 'indigenous' as a qualifier for 'peoples, organisations and groups'. Understandably, the basis for this is the resort to self-identification and not to any objective criteria. The more accurate formulation therefore, would be "people, organisations and groups identifying themselves as indigenous..."
- iii) The document consistently uses the expression indigenous "people" (in the singular) excepting in paragraph 6 under Annex 1, which reads 'peoples' and should therefore be corrected. The reference in paragraph 6 of the report has already been dwelt upon.
- iv) Paragraph 53 under Annex 1 is presumptuous in that it assumes the presence of indigenous people in all States. It needs to be qualified. We propose the insertion of "where applicable" after "recognise" and before "the existence".

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to take this opportunity to touch upon identical issues with regard to the List of Attendance as circulated by the Secretariat (E/CN.4/Sub.2/Ac.4/1995/INF.1). My delegation wishes to express concern at the manner in which the Secretariat has drawn up the list.

We are not aware of the existence of any category of "indigenous organisations in consultative Status with ECOSOC". Section VII should therefore be merged with section VI under Part II. Again, we are not aware of there either being any criteria for differentiating "indigenous nations, organisations and groups" (Section VIII) from "other organisations" (Section XI) or the Secretariat being given any authority to arbitrarily categorise organisations. If the argument is that this is on the basis of self-identification, my delegation would like to submit that self-identification gives organisations

access to WGIP but does not decide on their status as indigenous or otherwise. Official documents must not compromise on accuracy. We suggest that the category be amended to read "organisations and groups identifying themselves as indigenous". Allow me to add, Mr. Chairman, that this is in no way to disregard the assertions of any organisation or group. Consider, the more accurate expression would have been "organisations and groups claiming to be indigenous". The word 'claiming', we feel, may however, have unwelcome connotations for many, and therefore could best be avoided. The qualifier "identifying themselves as indigenous", on the other hand, is value-neutral and has no negative connotations.

We hope that the final list would address this issue and reflect categories of organisations and groups accurately.

I thank you.