

WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS, 12TH  
SESSION, AGENDA ITEM 4

Statement by the observer delegation of Sweden,  
Counsellor Ann Marie Pennegård on July 26, 1994

Madam Chairman,

The Swedish delegation wants to congratulate you and this meeting to your re-election as chairman of this working group and our appreciation of your introductory statement yesterday.

The completion by this working group after many years of important discussions and drafting of the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples is indeed a major achievement. The important first step towards an international and comprehensive standard set by the United Nations, worked out in cooperation between indigenous populations and governments is thus behind us. We now have to reflect on the procedures to follow in order to secure its early proclamation by the General Assembly. In order to effectively influence developments at all levels towards a better protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous people all over the world, it needs to be based on as broad and universal support as possible. One important aim of a declaration on this subject for my delegation is to ensure and safe-guard a non-discriminatory application of individual rights towards all persons, men and women alike, belonging to indigenous people.

The Swedish delegation expects a substantive and in-depth discussion on the draft declaration in the Sub-commission this year. We appreciate that these discussions also can be based on the comments and proposals received from indigenous organizations, NGO:s and governments and a text which have undergone a technical review in order not to be contradictory to other international standards set in the field of human rights.

My delegation regards it important, at this threshold of a decade for the world's indigenous peoples, that we aim for an declaration to be adopted during this decade. We hope that the Sub-Commission will be able to conclude its work and comments on the draft declaration already this year and submit it for consideration at the 51st session of the Commission on Human Rights. A natural next step would be that the Commission, in manner similar to its handling of all other standard-setting activities in the field of human rights, decides to establish an open-ended working group to consider the draft declaration.

In the resolution and procedures establishing such a working-group under the Commission, it is especially important to the Swedish delegation that the representatives of indigenous peoples continue to be involved. To this end we warmly welcome and support the proposal made in the statement yesterday by the observer delegation of Australia, that governments propose to the Commission that the rules regarding NGO-participation in the deliberations of its working groups be modified in regard to this particular working group to ensure the participation of indigenous populations.

We would furthermore like to see the mandate of such an working-group spelled out in as clear and unambiguous way as possible. The aim of the working-group should be, based on the draft text presented by this working-group and the Sub-Commission, to submit a final text for approval by the Commission as early as possible. Attention need to be paid to secure that the dates for meetings of the working group are convenient for indigenous populations and that sufficient resources is given to its disposal in terms of both servicing staff and the necessary expertise. You, Madam Chairman, is hoped to among the experts that continue to contribute to such a working group. Governments should be encouraged to participate actively from the out-set of the working-groups deliberations in order to facilitate and speed up the process towards the early proclamation by the United Nations of a standard on this subject. Let me assure you, Madam Chairman, that the Swedish delegation will strive to find constructive solutions which are acceptable to everyone on questions which will be discussed in our future deliberations towards a final declaration. We will do so in a spirit and manner that can secure a continuous dialouge based on partnership between indigenous people and governments.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.