

Technische Universität Berlin

Dr. Arnold Groh
Sekt. FR 6-3
D-10587 Berlin
e-mail: a.groh@berlin.de



Structural
Analysis of
Cultural
Systems

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
First session

Geneva, 1-3 October 2008

Statement on Item 3

Research Methodologies and Practical Considerations

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Firstly, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate you to your election, as well as congratulate all of the Experts to their nomination.

According to resolution 6/36 of the Human Rights Council, indigenous rights have to be dealt with by focusing mainly on studies and research. Therefore, I would like to briefly point out some aspects that are central for methodological considerations.

Firstly, the validity of studies on indigenous issues is the greater, the more they take the reality of indigenous life into consideration.

Secondly, indigenous contexts have been destabilised to different extents by the dominant global culture.

Thirdly, depending on the fragility of the indigenous social system, research itself can contribute to destabilisation, if the invasiveness of its methods is not minimised.

Therefore, the more intact an indigenous social system is, the more it is necessary to carry out the investigations in an integrative, non-destabilising way. The need for carefully designed research methodologies is also given by Articles 8 and 31 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which grants the right of the protection of indigenous culture.

As we have demonstrated in several field studies of our own, the invasiveness of researchers can not only be minimised, but an integrative methodology can even contribute to the re-stabilisation of indigenous cultures. I would like to point out that such a

re-stabilisation also conforms to Article 11 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Finally, I would like to also briefly remark that, since this First Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has the purpose of planning the structure of the future sessions, we can ascertain that the form, in which the sessions of the former Working Group on Indigenous Peoples took place have proven to be very effective. Therefore, we can take this form as practical orientation. This includes that the sessions should take place in summer, which would be convenient for the majority of indigenous representatives. Also, it makes sense to continue the sessions in Geneva, in order to have a certain counterbalance to the Permanent Forum that takes place in the US.

As for the former WGIP sessions, both the place and the time of the year were very well chosen. Continuing that tradition promises a framework to the future Sessions of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well: A form that then could effectively be filled with content.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.