

Workshp agenda : participation/ formula at the P.F.  
2/17/1999



Good morning M. relatives,

The IITC has expressed its views and proposals about the form and structure of the Permanent Forum over the years and has used the statement made in 1994 at the WGIP. The IITC continues to support its position with slight or minor adjustments, given by the political climate.

It is important to note Mr. Chairman, that in our discussions on whether the body of the PF should be an advisory or policy making body, that although IP have expressed the policy category, no government has opposed it either and we hope to hear more from governments on this question.

The proposal presented yesterday by the Guatemala Maya delegation expresses the high desires for an effective P.F. because of the critical situation in their land but also certainly applicable in many other regions. Based on the Maya Peoples proposal and recommendation such as ours, we hope that a mutual and common ground can be found.

It is clear that we must explain here what happened last year at the Commission on Human Rights where members of the Commission had serious thoughts about possibly terminating further talks on such a Permanent Forum. Luckily for Indigenous Peoples that Denmark delegation sought to salvage the work of the P.F. and proposed in a resolution calling for one more workshop to bring forth a clear paper with focus on what the function participation and finances are addressed.

For this we and other I.P. are grateful to Denmark government. Having said this, Mr. Chairman, it is our intention to have one report come from this workshop and that our statements be attached to reflect the diverse views and opinions expressed in this room.

Yesterday morning, we all heard from the government of China and are generally pleased with their comments. In particular, they said in closing that perhaps the P.F. should not be completed until after the passage of the UN draft declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Mr. Chairman, my delegation takes that as a yes in support and endorsing the progress being made in discussion as those 45 principles of the draft declaration, which are the minimal of rights for our survival.

Mr. Chairman, yesterday we also heard from the USA delegation where they said in part 'the US cannot accept Indigenous Peoples in the P.I. as equals to governments'. This to us, Mr. Chairman, indicates that the USA has not risen to the level of a 'political will' to achieve an amicable level of respect. Perhaps in time the USA will come closer to understanding the status of Indigenous sovereign nations.

Mr. Chairman, the composition of the members who sit on the Permanent Forum will be critical, especially during the first 3 or 4 years. It will require personalities who are also aware of the UN system and its process. Indigenous persons such as Rigoberta Menchu I mention for

identification purposes to give an example of course there are many others to name. I merely say this for us all to consider.

Finally whether this body chooses an advisory or policy role for the P.F., it should also include a guarantee or assurances in some form that this body of the P.F. continues to move up to a more appropriate level where Indigenous Peoples issues and concerns find satisfactory resolve.

Thank you for your attention.

A. Gonzalez