

Review of Key Developments under Item 4a

UN WGIP 31 July - 4 Aug 2006

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Indeed, since the last session of this workgroup, many indigenous peoples have seen important developments, in the negative as well as the positive direction. I shall summarize just a few key developments

It took over 500 years, and it happened in the December 2005 presidential election in Bolivia that for the first time in the Americas that an American Indian became a state president. As we have seen since, this has profoundly altered Bolivia's politics and the way South America's poorest nation is seen abroad. Thanks to his landslide victory Evo Morales and his left-wing Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) defeated the traditional parties and gained a strong mandate that allows him to set a new course, such as stopping the plunder of Bolivia's resources, enhancing the livelihoods of the indigenous majority in this poor country and to build alliances across the continent to further people's power. This has and will have a tremendous impact in the Americas and beyond. It should be seen as a boost to the practical exercise of the right to self-determination of indigenous peoples.

On the other side intra-state conflicts (which are much more frequent than those between states) have in many ways targeted indigenous peoples. Since 2003 the indigenous African' nations of the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa in Darfur became victims of genocidal aggression by the Sudanese military regime, which is arming Arab militias to attack defenceless civilians, as we have seen in South and Central Sudan

since the 1980s. The peace agreement with South Sudan—which brought one of the world deadliest wars to a standstill in 2002, after forty years of fighting, slaughter and famines—gave the military junta the opportunity to start war in Western Sudan.

In the Congo the Mbuti pygmies have suffered genocidal attacks by militias, including the one commanded by vice-president Bemba. Though the International Criminal Court has received evidence provided by the Minority Rights Group it has remained inactive. The Khoisan peoples of Southern Africa have come under increasing attack by state agencies as well.

In Burma the world's longest war, which has ravaged this multi-ethnic country since 1948, continues in its 58th year with the onslaught of the Burmese military dictatorship against the Karen, after the breakdown of so-called peace talks. The Karen refuse to surrender as have several other indigenous nationalities. The Karen National Union is the only force which has never surrendered. Meanwhile hundreds of thousands of Karen became IDPs in the jungles of the Karen state and refugees in Thailand. Massive human rights violations continue. The international boycott of Burma has proven ineffective.

In India the negotiations between the Indian Union and the strongest insurgent group, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland have been dragging on for eight years without result. The last cease-fire prolongation came on the last day of January 2006 and a breakthrough is still not on the horizon. Just before the end of the eight-year-old ceasefire on 31 January midnight, the Centre and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac-Muivah), after four days of intense negotiations in Bangkok, agreed to extend the truce in Nagaland by another six months. The Naga people was already prepared for a possible continuation of 50

years of war, which resulted in 200,000 being killed, as many Indian soldiers being an occupation force and unconstitutional emergency act being imposed, making the lives of the Nagas miserable.

In Sri Lanka the war against the Tamil minority in the Northeast has intensified, with a new chauvinist government of the Sinhala minority taking power, after years of cease-fire and stalled peace talks.' The government restarted indiscriminate terror bombardments in the Northeast while the EU branded the LTTE guerrilla as "terrorist" organization.

In Iraq the invaders and occupiers are working hard to create a civil war. Indiscriminate attacks against the minority Sunni Arab civilians in several cities of the northwest continue on a daily base. As revenge for the successful resistance among the Sunni this group has been singled out and victimized in the most heinous ways.

To conclude:

Responses to conflict can only be effective if based on a comprehensive understanding of the roots of contemporary mass violence.

Almost invariably and wherever they live— indigenous peoples are confronted by the continuation of colonialism as so-called "internal colonialism". In this perspective "conflict resolution" is often a too ambitious term. In many conflicts we might be satisfied to be able to transform them.

When addressing themes such as conflict resolution, prevention, management, and transformation of conflicts, the main topics for indigenous peoples are collective rights, best exercises in forms of autonomy and self-governance. And here the starting point remains the inherent right to self-determination of all peoples.