

DELEGATION OF SWEDEN

WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS, 12TH
SESSION, AGENDA ITEM 9; CONSIDERATION OF A
PERMANENT FORUM FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

WGIP 94 GOV/EUR.SWE/1

Statement by Mr Krister Stoor, the Observer
Delegation of Sweden, on July 29, 1994.

Madam Chairman,

Sweden supports the establishment of a permanent forum within the United Nations system for indigenous populations. However, in my country the discussion on this subject has just started. It will continue at various levels. The discussion in our new Saami Assembly at their next session this fall will be especially valuable. At this time and stage my delegation therefore only have a few preliminary remarks to make.

For the Swedish delegation it is crucial that indigenous peoples have the opportunity to take part in the negotiations leading to the necessary decisions in regard to the establishment of the new Forum. These decisions should be reached through a process of mutual understanding and agreement among the interested parties; indigenous peoples, governments and the United Nations.

The general aim of the Decade for the World's Indigenous People to strengthen international cooperation in "areas such as human rights, the environment, development, education and health" in full consultation and cooperation with indigenous people, should also guide the work of the permanent forum. Activities during the Decade is to be focused upon the above-mentioned areas of work. These areas will have implications for the permanent forum, in regard to its mandate, its institutional status within the UN and the organs to which it shall report. These broad areas of work indicate that the Permanent Forum might be established in a framework linked to the human rights institutional structure, but with reporting obligations also to other organs.

Transparency and involvement of indigenous people will be key elements in the establishment of the forum. The forum should include representatives of indigenous people and should be open to State representation, as well as for the participation of specialized agencies and other relevant bodies of the United Nations. Regular contacts between the permanent forum and the focal point within the Centre for Human Rights, as well as with the Coordinator of the Decade, are to be encouraged. The permanent forum should be in a position to identify problems affecting the situation of indigenous people worldwide, with a view to finding possible solutions to them.

Madam Chairman,

The Swedish delegation will listen carefully to the comments made under this item, especially those coming from indigenous organizations themselves. This meeting is really the first occasion when governments, indigenous groups, relevant parts of the UN system and NGO:s are given an occasion to

address this subject in a more comprehensive way. We may conclude from this first debate that the time is not yet ripe to take any final decisions regarding the new Forum's mandate, structure, the question of participation and its institutional and financial status. We have benefitted from the questions and proposals raised in the documents before us under this agenda item. One of them is a document presented by you, Madam Chairman. We hope that you will continue to - based on broad consultations - present to us your ideas and opinions on the many questions raised in this document. Let me assure you, Madam Chairman, that Sweden will continue to be involved and participate in the discussions and decisions on this important subject.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.