

Working Group on Indigenous Populations Palais
des Nations, Geneve
24th Session, July 31-August 4, 2005

Agenda Item 6 (e) The Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
Statement by the International Indian Treaty Council

Mr. Chairman, the International Indian Treaty Council and our affiliates are encouraged by the United Nations Declaration on the Second Decade for Indigenous Peoples and the Programme of Action announced by the Coordinator of the Second Decade, Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, Jose Antonio Ocampo, at the last 2006 Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. He announced an action-oriented programme for the Second Decade, tying the overarching goals of the Second Decade and Millennium Development Goals by means of particular projects. It is our belief that a major foundational achievement of the goals to be achieved within the Second Decade would be the immediate adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Although we did not achieve the goal of adopting the Declaration within the last Decade this reality is now within our grasp and it would in fact assist us greatly in the achievement of the many goals outlined within the MDGs. However, we cannot ignore a deep concern that the Millennium Development Goals must be re-defined not only to express the development goals of Indigenous Peoples themselves, but also take into account the situation of Indigenous Peoples worldwide. Forced removal from ancestral lands, lack of consultation and free, prior and informed consent to development projects imposed by International Financial Institutions and transnational corporations and other violations of their human rights continue to plague us and our collective right to development and right to self-determination. These worldwide, persistent and pervasive human rights violations drown us in a deepening poverty.

We recall the final report of the previous Coordinator of the First Decade for Indigenous Peoples', the High Commissioner for Human Rights, who promised to maintain the momentum of the First Decade with regard to Indigenous Human Rights, and to fortify their protection. We cannot forget that, as stated by Mr. Ocampo, although Indigenous Peoples are less than 5% of the world's population, they are 15% of the world's poor. Particular *projects* may help some of the world's Indigenous Peoples, but all of the world's Indigenous Peoples would benefit from the promotion and protection of our human rights, particularly in the implementation of the MDGs.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the Working Group should recommend to Mr. Ocampo that he coordinate his work on the Second Decade with the Commissioner on Human Rights and the human rights mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples established during the First Decade in order that the programmes and projects developed for the Second Decade truly meet the expectations and aspirations of Indigenous Peoples. As alluded to by many of my colleagues in their interventions the Chairs Text of the Declaration is not a perfect document but it is a minimum standard that will go a long way towards the recognition and respect of our Sacred Treaties and collective rights of our Indigenous Peoples as members of the family of nations of Mother Earth.

¹ Final report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reviewing the activities within the United Nations system under the programme for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples, 4 January 2005, F/CN.4/2005/87