



# AUSTRALIA

**WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS**  
**12TH SESSION**  
**25-29 JULY 1994**

**STATEMENT BY MR COLIN WILLIS**  
**ON BEHALF OF THE AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION**

**Item 6: Study on Treaties, Agreements and Other  
Constructive Arrangements between States  
and Indigenous Peoples**

GENEVA  
28 JULY 1994

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

WGIP 94 GOV/OCE - AUS/3

MADAM CHAIRMAN, DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND YOUR REPRESENTATIVES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

WHEN THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR WAS ASKED IN 1988 TO COMPILE A REPORT ON TREATIES, AGREEMENTS AND OTHER CONSTRUCTIVE ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN STATES AND INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS, AUSTRALIA WAS HOPEFUL THAT THE REPORT WOULD ASSIST US IN OUR CONSIDERATION OF THE ISSUES INVOLVED IN THE CONCLUSION OF AN INSTRUMENT OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AND OUR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. THIS ISSUE HAS BEEN A MATTER OF CONSIDERABLE INTEREST AND DEBATE WITHIN THE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY FOR THE PAST DECADE, AND AS STATED IN AUSTRALIA'S STATEMENT UNDER ITEM 5 OF THE AGENDA OF THIS WORKING GROUP, THE COUNCIL FOR ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION HAS RECENTLY PUBLISHED A DISCUSSION PAPER DEALING WITH THE ISSUE.

MADAME CHAIRMAN, AUSTRALIA IS DISAPPOINTED THAT, SIX YEARS AFTER THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE STUDY, THIS WORKING GROUP IS STILL TO RECEIVE A FINAL REPORT FROM THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR. WE THEREFORE URGE THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR TO WORK TOWARDS THE COMPLETION AND PUBLICATION OF THAT REPORT BY THE TIME THIS WORKING GROUP NEXT MEETS. WE HOPE THAT THE REPORT WILL CONTAIN SOME COMPARATIVE ANALYSES OF THE WAYS IN WHICH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HAVE BEEN ABLE TO USE THOSE TREATIES TO PROTECT AND ADVANCE THEIR INTERESTS, TOGETHER WITH SOME RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO FUTURE ACTION IN THIS FIELD BY STATES, BY THIS WORKING GROUP AND BY THE U.N. SYSTEM AS A WHOLE.