

United Nation  
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples  
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The Native Peoples Movement for self-determination from San Andres Islands, Colombia

Thank you Mr. Chairman for giving me the floor. My name is Juan Ramirez Dawkins and I am representing the native people of San Andres Islands. Before I begin my intervention, may I first pay respect to you and to the distinguished members of the Permanent Forum, and fellow delegates, observers and the media. It is a great honor and extreme pleasure to be here representing the voice of my people in this historic moment.

We are indigenous native people of San Andres, Providencia and Sta. Catalina Islands, a possession of Colombia in the western Caribbean Sea, 120km. off the coast of Nicaragua and 500km. North of continental Colombia the archipelago covers a total area of 349,000 sq.km., which has been claimed by the Nicaragua government since December 6, 2001 at the international Court of Justice in the Hague.

That our origins, history, cultural identity, language, traditions, customs, religious beliefs, institutions and social organizations differentiate us from other peoples and especially from the people of the Republic of Colombia;

That in the early 1800's our islands, by accidents of history and possibly military force, came under the administrations of Greater Colombia and, later, of the part which became the Republic of Colombia, despite the cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic differences between us and the people of Colombia;

That the Colombian State, in violation of our human and collective rights, has implemented a policy of colonization, domination and discrimination against us with the intention of erasing our cultural identity, extinguishing us as a people and nation usurping our territory and killing our future:

That among the disastrous results of said policy:

- More than 50,000 Colombians and other foreigners have invaded and overpopulated our territory, crowding us out and rendering us – its approximately 30,000 indigenous Native inhabitants – a displaced minority in our land; the population density of ten-square-mile San Andres far exceeds its carrying capacity, defined as the maximum environmentally sustainable population density for a small islands;
- Our culture and language have been virtually eliminated from the islands' education system and public institutions; most of the teachers, judges and policemen are Colombians who speak only Spanish and are therefore unable to communicate with us in our language.
- The laws and administrative acts governing our territory are made without our participation; taxes and other burdens have been imposed on us without our consent;
- Our territory has been occupied at least for the last 30 years by hundreds of combat-ready units of the Colombians military for the sole purpose of harassing and intimidating us and preserving the imposed colonialist system;
- Colombia has been signing treaties and agreements with our other nations ceding to them portions of our territory and territorial sea, or granting them fishing privileges detrimental to our interests and our islands' natural resources, in exchange for recognition by said countries of Colombian sovereignty in the dispute between Colombia and Nicaragua over our islands.

That the physical, economic, social, political and environmental deterioration of our territory can only continue to worsen under the system of government imposed by Colombia; our islands can survive only under a system of home rule, a system wherein we the Native people are the principal actors.

That it is our moral right, it is our duty, to adopt all decisions and undertake all actions we deem necessary to protect and save our territory, cultural and way of life; to remove the threat of extinction hovering over us; to rebuild our downtrodden and marginalized society; to better our social and economic situation, to provide for our development and our place in the

world; to render our territory a better place for our descendants; and to restore conditions for the perpetuation of our nation;

That, in accordance with Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization and other international instruments ratified by the Republic of Colombia, we have the legal right to self-determination, to prior consultation and to prior consent in respect to all decisions affecting our lives, our density and our territory,

We therefore, the indigenous Native people of San Andres, Providencia and Santa Catalina Islands, invoking the protection of God Almighty, do hereby resolve:

- To vigorously seek full self-determination, using every legitimate means necessary to attain it including acts of civil disobedience, negotiations with the government of Colombia; appeals to the Colombian people, the United Nations and the international community for support; and creation of our institutions of self-government.

We therefore believe that we together can <sup>construct</sup> ~~better~~ better vessels and canoes to sail and to paddle towards better port for better lives.

Thank You Mr. Chairman

*One People,  
one Nation,  
one Love.*