
Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Tenth Session 10-14 July 2016

Joint Statement Item 7: Indigenous peoples' participation in the United Nations system as follow up to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

Wednesday 12 July 1100-1300

Chair,

I make this statement on behalf of the CANZ Group of countries – Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Our countries continue to be strong supporters of ensuring the voices, opinions and insights of indigenous peoples are heard at the United Nations.

In line with the Outcome Document of the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples, and with the aims of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we believe that indigenous peoples have the right to participate, and be heard, in decisions that affect them at the United Nations.

We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in the consultations and negotiations on this important issue.

Indigenous peoples have long been denied their own voice in bodies such as the United Nations.

While they are citizens of Member States, participation in the United Nations system will enable their views to be heard, as Member States may not always reflect the views of indigenous peoples.

We are pleased that indigenous peoples have been involved in the consultations around enabling increased indigenous participation at the United Nations.

We reiterate that the commitment to enhance the participation of indigenous peoples in the UN is not a new concept. In 2014 at the WCIP, participants, including States, committed to consider ways to enable the participation of indigenous peoples in relevant meetings of the UN on issues affecting them.

Following this, member states were given a clear mandate by GA resolution 70/232 to adopt a resolution on indigenous participation, which was to be adopted by the end of the current GA session. It has now been under negotiation for over twelve months.

Our countries remain steadfast in their commitment to achieving enhanced participation, in line with 70/232.

We note with regret that deliberations moved away from considering enhanced participation in the UN General Assembly. In that light, we encourage all UN bodies and organisations to enhance the

participation of indigenous peoples in relevant meetings and in particular the Human Rights Council and ECOSOC

However, as our discussions move forward, it remains important to our countries to ensure that the United Nations gives consideration to broader participation of indigenous peoples, including in the General Assembly.

We need to ensure that the outcome of the process is one that enables all indigenous peoples to benefit.

Noting that this process is yet to be concluded, we will continue to work constructively with fellow Member States to enhance the participation of indigenous peoples in a manner which does not reduce their existing opportunities in the United Nations.

We are all on a journey to strengthen the participation of indigenous peoples in our domestic processes at home.

And we are all committed to ensuring that indigenous peoples, wherever they live are able to influence global decision making at the United Nations.

We look forward to the day when indigenous peoples are able to engage across the United Nations, speaking with independent and unique voices, which may differ from those of Member States, presenting the views of peoples who for too long have not been heard.