

STATEMENT OF Mr. R.J. LAKRA, ADIVASI PEOPLES NETWORK, INDIA  
AT THE UN WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS  
Geneva 28<sup>th</sup> July-1<sup>st</sup> August 1997

Agenda Item No. 7 : International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

Madam Chairperson,

This statement contains some remarks in brief how the resources still left for the International Decade (of the World's Indigenous Peoples) can be utilised more effectively. This is because the situation of the indigenous peoples has gravely deteriorated more or less steadily, during the last 50 years in spite of considerable means for development for them.

The beginning of the International Decade has not shown any substantial improvement up till now.

1. It seems necessary that a revision of the development aid policies and its implementation system of the last decades must take place in order to make necessary changes in the system itself.
2. Human Rights are universal, also the principles and implementation methods of social and economical development are universal. These must be applied in practice for the indigenous peoples too and not denied by giving fake reasons. This includes :
  - Full participation and freedom of choice in all development activities affecting them.
  - Help for self-help and for self-sufficiency.
  - Development assistance/aid through the organisations of the indigenous people themselves and not via the NGO's and other institutions of the dominating society.
3. International aids/projects must undergo thoroughly international monitoring from the very beginning.
4. System of direct and indirect restraint must be replaced by empowering the Indigenous peoples. (Restraint/suppression is the main cause of the desperate situation and it is not due to a lack of development projects and the ability to develop)
5. Encouragement and promotion should be given for permanent FORUMS for interreligious dialogue at national and international levels with the full participation of Indigenous peoples. (There can be no peace, hope or progress for the minorities like us without peace and understanding between the different religions and cultures.)
6. World-wide family planning must be a top priority in all development considerations. The same priority must be given to the protection of forest. ( There is no hope of survival for a large number of indigenous peoples without these measures irrespective of the other measures taken for their survival).
7. Close co-operation and co-ordinated activities of all organisations concerned such as the UN-Human Rights department, World Bank, WHO, ILO, Human Rights Organisations and the funding agencies are required for a real progress-for all , including the indigenous peoples. (Each organisation should not be satisfied with the good work/result, they achieve. They must judge if their concerted efforts are moving the whole human community, including the minorities like us, in a positive direction or not).

All these requires of course much more efforts and financial support.

Madam Chairperson, may I request you to kindly forward these proposals to the concerned Institutions/bodies.

Thank you very much for your kind attention