

Working Group on Indigenous Populations
XIII Session

Items 8 and 9 of the agenda: Future role of the Working Group and Consideration of the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people

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WGIP 95 GOV/SAM-BRA/2

Statement by the Observer Delegation of Brazil

My Delegation takes the floor on items 8 and 9 of the agenda to comment upon the proposal to consider the establishment of a forum for indigenous issues in the UN and the future work of this Working Group. First of all, let me say that our position on these points has already been expressed last year by Uruguay, on his statement on behalf of Brazil, Nicaragua and Panamá.

2. Secondly, as you know, Brazil has participated with keen interest and constructive spirit in the debates that followed the discussions last year in this Working Group. We took part in the Copenhagen workshop held in accordance with resolution 1995/30 of the Commission on Human Rights, following a recommendation from resolution 49/214 of the General Assembly. We welcome the report of that meeting and support its recommendations, and in particular the suggestion that the Secretary-General prepare a report on the existing mechanisms, procedures and programmes within the UN for coordination and for the promotion of the rights of indigenous people, in order to make possible their more effective use. This report should also contemplate information on implementation by the UN organizations and other international development and finance organizations of the recommendations contained in paragraph 26.5 of Chapter 26 of Agenda 21.

3. Madam Chairperson, my Delegation took note of the comments made by Governments and indigenous organizations as contained in Addenda 1 and 3 to Doc. 7 of this session, and we are grateful to them. I have also taken note of your suggestions regarding the structuring and other technical aspects related to a possible model for such a body. Unfortunately, your contribution was only distributed in the course of this session - Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1995/7/Add.2 - and time was not sufficient for my Government to react to it during this session. I promise to you that careful consideration will be given to your ideas and we will come back to them in due time.

4. As regards the immediate future of this Working Group, my Delegation is pleased to note that its significance has been renewed in face of the on-going International Decade for the World's Indigenous People. Brazil has already expressed, during the Technical Meeting that preceded this session, that "the Working Group should be requested to fulfill a useful role in reviewing international activities undertaken during the Decade, and in receiving voluntary information from Governments on the implementation of the goals of the International Decade in their respective countries". We support your suggestion contained in paragraph 12 of doc. 6. An agenda item to follow up on the International Decade should possibly be contemplated.

5. We also believe that thought-provoking discussions like the one which we have had this year, on the question of whether a definition of "indigenous people" is needed or not, may contribute to the work of other bodies of the UN. However, I believe that commentary on the provisions of the draft declaration should be developed only after requested from the Intergovernmental Working Group. Moreover, Brazil does not consider future elaboration of any other international instrument by this Working Group a priority.

6. Another point of concern to my Delegation is the publication of "periodic thematic reports or indigenous yearbook" by this Working Group. This proposal was introduced in your note, without any specific reference to what would be the contents or format of such a document. We believe that the report of the meetings of this Working Group are the proper means of circulating information brought to the attention of the members of the Working Group, since it follows UN practice of being widely distributed and for free.

7. Finally, Madam Chairperson, let me suggest that the Working Group broadens its attention-span to look also at developments at other *fora*, such as in UNESCO and FAO, which have conducted studies and standard-setting activities on folk rights and farmer's rights, of very particular interest to indigenous people. The Working Group might also offer, to cooperate with other intergovernmental bodies, such as the Conferences of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity and of the Convention on Desertification, in order to help them to implement specific provisions on the protection and promotion of traditional knowledge and lifestyles.

through appropriate channels,