

Key Points on the UN DRIP and Critique of the programming by EMRIP

Mr Chairman,

I am Chris Scherrer, Professor for peace and mass violence studies, and a genocide scholar at Hiroshima Peace Institute of Hiroshima City University, and I am one of a few dozens in this hall who can say that UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples had become part of our lives, since it took over a decade of discussing and producing the first version of it and many more years after.

I want to draw your attention to the most important argument of the discussion so far, mentioned once, the task of transforming the UN DRIP into a Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and I guess it would be appropriate to take up this key issue in Agenda Item 5.

The “Working Group” was probably the biggest and longest running understatement in the history of human rights bodies at the United Nations. Contrary to EMRIP it had standard setting powers. This is a very critical point. As everybody knows it’s the WGIP, the very body who made history by elaborating over more than a decade the text of the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, for which a separate working groups was created, with the *sole task to finish the WGIP’s work on it, in other words to water down the original text.*

The indigenous delegates, however, have prevented this for the most part for the next years.

What you read in the text of the declaration today is more or less what we have been elaborating in one extra week for a decade of the total life time of WGIP who became 24 years old and was abolished in distasteful ways only weeks before its 25 birthday. I was told that within the UN system there is a certain tradition: if an organism reaches 25 years, it is considered indispensable.

The UN declaration has been adopted by all but four states. It’s not by error that those four are former British settler colonies who have voted against the declaration were chiefly among those states pushing to abolish the workgroup, and unfortunately they could do so successfully, for some reason. All of these settler states have committed genocide against the original inhabitants of the continents or countries they invaded. Three of those four settler states meanwhile have come to grips and changed their mind. Looking at the track record in the voting pattern, the fourth British settler state has never hesitated to vote against any UN resolution single-handedly, or together with its fully dependent colonies such as Micronesia or countries it finances to a large degree, such as Israel.

Mr. Chairman, I felt really bad when the hammering came into action, I am sure that you do not like to play this role of the man with the hammer. I believe we don’t need an expert mechanism with this property in the first place. In our context experts become experts by listening to our indigenous brothers and sisters. Of course I am not calling for EMPRI’s abolition; rather I think we should go back to the concept successfully applied by the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples.

Mr. Chairman, reports by Indigenous Peoples from five continents about their life conditions, the inhibits put up states, the many forms of discrimination applied

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worldwide, or worse, outright attacks in Indigenous peoples are necessary reports which should actually be encouraged to be delivered as a first agenda item to be talked about at this conference. It is essential for the United Nations system to get to know about violence and discrimination against IPs and to act as an agent of the conflict mitigation.

For taking action to protect IPs against state violence or severe discrimination, what is needed is so-called early warning which in most cases turns out to be late warning. This conference could and should by all means play a constructive role in warning; it should be part and parcel of the mandate of this mechanism.

Thank Mr. Chairman, expert members, indigenous brothers and sisters

Christian P. Scherrer (PhD, Dr.phil, Univ. of Berne 1985)
Professor at Hiroshima Peace Institute (HPI) of
Hiroshima City University, Japan
Founder, ECOR, Tegelen, The Netherlands / Head,
ICGR-project at HPI-HCU

HPI, Ote-machi Heiwa Building 9-10
4-1-1 Ote-machi, Naka-ku
Hiroshima, 730-0051 Japan
phone: +81-82-544-7628 (direct) / fax: +81-82-544-7573
e-mail: scherrer@peace.hiroshima-cu.ac.jp ;
chris2525scherrer@yahoo.co.uk
<http://serv.peace.hiroshima-cu.ac.jp/English/>
