

**Commission on Human Rights
Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities**

Working Group on Indigenous Populations

Fifteenth session

28 July - 1 August 1997.

**Item 4 . Standard Setting Activities : Evolution of Standards Concerning The Rights of
Indigenous People**

Delivered by Helen Corbett

28th July 1997.

Madam Chairperson,

This is a joint statement on behalf of the Indigenous Woman Aboriginal Corporation, New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and the National Committee to Defend Black Rights Aboriginal Corporation

Our comments will be brief and to the point. First we would like to thank you for the work that you have done in compiling your supplementary working paper on the concept of "indigenous peoples" as contained in E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1997/2. Secondly, we wish to have recorded that we concur with your conclusions that it is neither desirable nor possible to capture a single definition of the world's diversity of indigenous peoples.

We stand firm in our resolute with previous joint indigenous peoples caucus positions on this question in the lifetime of this Working Group of Indigenous Populations and the Commission on Human Rights Intercessional Working Group Established in Accordance with Resolution 1995\32 that "it is not for governments to determine who constitutes a nation or a peoples. It is for the peoples to decide themselves".

This view represents the expression of our fundamental right of self determination. That is, our right to self identify who we are. Article 8 of the present UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples correctly reflects this right "to identify as indigenous and to be recognised as such".

Madam Chairperson,

There is no official definition of indigenous peoples in current Australian law and practice. In accordance with their position at the CHR Working Group meeting in November 1995 to do so would be "misconceived".

Given the recent trends in conservatism and new wave of racism in Australia towards Aboriginal peoples, we would invite and welcome the new Australian government to maintain this position. In this way, it can demonstrate its committment and responsibility towards racial equality, harmony and equity of human rights to the international community.

Thank you.

Please check against delivery