

EM09 Juane 106

Hm 4

12.08.09



THE NAVAJO NATION
Window Rock, Navajo Nation (AZ)
USA



2nd Session of Expert Mechanism on Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Geneva, Switzerland
August 12, 2009

**POSITIVE INITIATIVES BY THE NAVAJO NATION AS IT
RELATES TO THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE
RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

Madame Chair, honorable members of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, respected representatives of indigenous peoples, greetings from the Navajo Nation once more.

On behalf of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission and the Navajo Nation, it is with great pleasure to speak again before this honorable forum. Yesterday, August 11, 2009, Navajo Nation was granted the opportunity to speak on the implementation of the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ("U.N. Declaration") and how the U.N. Declaration can enshrine the protection of indigenous human rights and inform this honorable forum on issues that remain to be addressed.

In this intervention, the Navajo Nation wants to convey the successes as an indigenous nation with regards to implementing human rights laws through its government-to-government relationship with the United States of America ("United States"). As noted yesterday, we touched on several issues that require intense concentration in order to achieve true self-determination and how the U.N. Declaration can help us reach a clearer understanding between the Navajo Nation and United States.

Throughout time, the Navajo Nation and its people have exercised their right of self-determination without the confines of any written study. More recently in time, the Navajo Nation has developed a modern form of government consisting of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial systems; the Executive and Legislative systems are democratically-elected. The Navajo Nation government represents over 300,000 enrolled members and 27,000 square miles of lands, territories and resources.

The Navajo Nation has experienced improved intergovernmental relationship with the United States. For instance, not only has the United States recognized the internal indigenous self-determination and educational assistance in 1975, it also provided necessities for financial assistance. While these intergovernmental initiatives require substantial attention and grave improvements, the Navajo Nation has made every effort to

ensure that the important government-to-government relationship is nurtured and that our human rights identified in the U.N. Declaration are not violated.

As an indigenous nation, the Navajo Nation has recently established its Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission ("Commission"). The Commission was established in light of the intense concerns by the Navajos that are discriminated against daily in the towns surrounding the exterior boundaries of the Navajo Nation. Protecting human rights of Navajos is paramount to the Navajo Nation government and its people. I should also note that the Commission has made the U.N. Declaration as its standard of achievement. The Commission is delighted to report that the Navajo Nation has taken great strides to not only educate its people but all peoples in the region.

As a direct outcome associated with discussions relating to indigenous peoples human rights, the Commission has: 1) conducted a number of public hearings in and near border towns to assess the state-of-affairs between Navajos and non-Navajos; 2) investigate over seventy-five (75) written complaints involving discrimination of Navajos; 3) continues to network with local, state, national and international groups and advocate for the recognition of Navajo human rights; and 4) has educated the public about human rights and the Navajo Nation's intolerance of human rights violations.

Within in the 2009 year, the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission has been able to receive the support for the U.N. Declaration from the United States' New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson and the United States' Council At-Large Land Based Tribes.

The final point I like to make in this honorable forum, as we discuss the implementation of the U.N. Declaration, is the fact that the Navajo Nation is prevented from placing its nation signs, with honor and pride, where its representatives are scated. While a mere sign could be viewed as unimportant by others, it is the Navajo Nation's exercise of free expression and identification. This is an excellent example of changes in procedures and processes in order to facilitate the proper implementation of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Thank you.