

UNITED NATIONS WORKING GROUP
ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS :
FIFTH SESSION

WGIP 87 GOV/OCE. AUS/4

STATEMENT BY THE OBSERVER DELEGATION
OF AUSTRALIA UNDER ITEM 6

7 AUGUST 1987

GENEVA

MADAM CHAIR,

I WISH TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY ON BEHALF OF THE OBSERVER DELEGATION OF AUSTRALIA TO ADDRESS THE WORKING GROUP UNDER ITEM 6 OF THE AGENDA ON "OTHER MATTERS".

MADAM CHAIR, AUSTRALIA HAS PARTICIPATED ACTIVELY IN THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT.

AUSTRALIA WAS CONCERNED AT THE CANCELLATION OF THE SUBCOMMISSION ON PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION, AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES AND THE WORKING GROUP SESSION IN 1986.

WE APPRECIATE THAT WHILE THE UN HAS FACED FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES, AND IN TIME WHEN COST SAVING MEASURES IN VARIOUS AREAS ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED, NEVERTHELESS, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE WORK OF THE GROUP IS NOT FURTHER INTERRUPTED. FURTHERMORE IT SHOULD CONTINUE TO RECEIVE ADEQUATE SUPPORT FROM THE UN SECRETARIAT.

THE WORKING GROUP HAS SERVED AS A VALUABLE INTERNATIONAL FORUM FOR CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE BETWEEN INDIGENOUS GROUPS, GOVERNMENTS, AND NON GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS, AND EXPERTS IN THIS FIELD.

AUSTRALIA ENCOURAGES THE PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT OF INDIGENOUS GROUPS IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP AND IN THE PROCESS TO DEVELOP STANDARDS, BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT INDIGENOUS GROUPS MUST HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO FORMALLY EXPRESS THEIR NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS IN THIS PROCESS.

TO THIS END, AUSTRALIA WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN THE SUCCESSFUL PASSAGE THROUGH THE UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, OF THE RESOLUTION WHICH LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UN VOLUNTARY FUND ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS. THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTED \$20,000 TO THE VOLUNTARY FUND SINCE THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP IN ORDER TO ASSIST INDIGENOUS GROUPS' SESSIONS.

AUSTRALIA WELCOMES THE APPOINTMENT IN MARCH THIS YEAR OF THE DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE VOLUNTARY FUND. WE APPRECIATE THE CARE WHICH THE UN SECRETARIAT HAVE TAKEN TO ENABLE INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION ON THE BOARD.

WE ARE PLEASED TO NOTE THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE FUNDS ARE TO BE MADE AVAILABLE TO INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATIVES WHO WOULD NOT OTHERWISE BE ABLE TO ATTEND THE MEETINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP.

AUSTRALIA, AS A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR, IS HOWEVER CONCERNED AT THE CONTINUED DELAY IN IMPLEMENTING THE FUND FOR THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH IT WAS DEvised. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE FIRST MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES WILL NOT NOW TAKE PLACE UNTIL WELL INTO 1988. GIVEN THE IMPORTANT ISSUES AFFECTING ACCESS TO THE FUND WHICH HAVE YET TO BE CONSIDERED WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE BOARD COULD MEET IN SUFFICIENT TIME TO ENSURE THAT THE FUND IS FULLY OPERATIONAL PRIOR TO THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP. SUCH PROGRESS WILL BE NECESSARY IF INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATIVES FROM COUNTRIES OR AREAS WHICH MIGHT OTHERWISE BE UNREPRESENTED ARE TO ATTEND THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE BASIS OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE DRAWN FROM THE VOLUNTARY FUND. WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO REITERATE OUR CONCERN THAT THE ABSOLUTE MINIMUM OF THE VOLUNTARY FUND BE EXPENDED ON ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS RELATING TO MEETINGS OF THE BOARD SO AS TO MAXIMISE THE AMOUNT OF FUNDS AVAILABLE TO REPRESENTATIVES OF INDIGENOUS GROUPS.

FINALLY, AUSTRALIA WISHES TO ENCOURAGE FURTHER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FUND BY GOVERNMENTS, NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER BODIES TO ENSURE BROADER INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP.

MADAM CHAIR, I THANK YOU.