

## UNITED NATIONS WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

Sixteenth Session , 27 - 31 July 1998

Statement of Mr. R.J. Lakra , Adivasi Peoples Network International, under agenda item no. 10 : Consideration of the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people

Madam Chairperson,

We are convinced that a permanent forum for indigenous peoples under United Nation's framework is of utmost importance, because their struggle for justice and human right will certainly take a long time. We are of the opinion that successful and fruitful working of such a forum will depend very much upon the composition of its members. This statement contains some remarks mainly in this matter.

1. The number of the representatives of the indigenous peoples should be at least in parity, if not in a majority, irrespective of the total number of its members.
2. It should be clearly known that the indigenous peoples of this world can articulate their demands for human right and justice and they can present their cases in such a forum. Therefore, the number of so called experts in such a forum must be kept at a minimum, if at all. The well intended experts and helpers of the indigenous peoples must accept the right of indigenous peoples to present their grievances by themselves in such a forum.
3. The administrative structure and the working set-up of such a forum must allow easy and possibly direct access to acute issues and situations also, including the urgent cases of neglected, numerically very small and weak groups of indigenous peoples known as vanishing tribes.
4. The forum must have the possibility to make very strong resolutions / recommendations for practical actions to all concerned organizations, bodies or institutions in order to solve the burning issues of the indigenous people and help them fulfilling their demands for justice and equal rights.

Madam Chairperson, we shall be highly obliged to you if you can help to include the above mentioned points in process of consideration for the establishment of a permanent forum. Thank you very much for your kind attention.

WGIP GR/SAS. IND/ 19