

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Statement to the Human Rights Council
Tuesday, June 27, 2006**

By

the Canadian Delegation

**Working Group on the Draft Declaration on the
Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

Mr. President,

Since the mid-1980s, successive Canadian governments have been working to achieve a UN Declaration affirming the rights of indigenous peoples.

Canada has worked for a Declaration that would promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of every indigenous person without discrimination and promote the collective rights of indigenous peoples around the world. To be truly effective, a Declaration must clearly set out expectations for the States in which indigenous peoples live.

The UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples deals with a broad range of issues. It was only in the last few years that the Working Group was able to reach agreement on many articles. The conclusions and proposals of the Chairperson-Rapporteur (E/CN.4/2006/79) reflect this progress. There are, however, some key issues, such as the section on lands, territories and resources, where the provisions are unclear and open to competing interpretations.

The Chairperson-Rapporteur has proposed language on several key issues that requires discussion among all parties. Such discussion on this latest draft has not taken place. Further improvements are possible and necessary. As such, Canada would like some more time to work with other member States and indigenous peoples to arrive at a more workable document, one

that is capable of being put to practical use and effectively addresses the concerns that we, and others, have raised over the years.

Canada would like the Human Rights Council to consider authorizing further consultations based on the Chairperson-Rapporteur's text, with a report back to the next session of this Council. The aim would be to clarify substantive issues to be addressed as well as to propose a process to develop specific proposals to achieve the broadest possible agreement and to provide for the adoption of a final draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly as soon as possible. The effective participation of representatives of indigenous organizations should continue in this process.

Given our continued commitment to the principles behind the Draft Declaration, we are simply asking the Human Rights Council to grant more time for discussion. We want to ensure that the Draft Declaration can be supported by as many countries as possible in as effective a manner as possible.

As stated recently by the Honourable Jim Prentice, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Metis and Non-Status Indians, concerning the Draft Declaration:

“We are simply asking for more time. After years of negotiation, a few more months would allow all parties to arrive at an improved text.”

Thank you.