

Human Rights Council
First Session, June 19 – 29, 2006
Agenda Item: Human Rights Mechanisms

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Chairman, the International Indian Treaty Council, Indigenous World Association, and FAIRA, address this Council with firm support for the extension of the mandate of the Sub-Commission and its Working Groups, particularly the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, until such time as the Council has fully determined its needs for expert advice, as required by General Assembly resolution 60/251.

It is clear that the many issues faced by this Council with regard to its organization require a great deal of discussion and expert advice before final decisions can be made regarding specific mandates and human rights mechanisms. We fully support the extension of the mandate of Special Procedures, particularly the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Indigenous Issues, and the re-establishment of the agenda item on Indigenous Issues within this Council's agenda.

But before final decisions on the mechanisms necessary to fully and faithfully comply with its mandate, the Council should not prematurely end those deliberative mechanisms that have served well the Commission and the promotion and protection of human rights for the past 60 years. The fifteen expert members of the Sub-Commission, all nominated by the Member States, have developed broad and valuable insights not only to the substance of human rights, but to mechanisms and working methods that can serve this Council well.

We speak on behalf of the extension of the mandate of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, as this working group has been for all of us Indigenous Peoples, an entry and education on the United Nations system. Its experts, members of the Sub-Commission, have over the years, guided States and Indigenous Peoples in an inter-active exchange that has strengthened and promoted recognition and respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples. It serves as a model of how States and Civil Society can relate to each other many times in the spirit of partnership.

The value of the Working Group for Indigenous Populations for Indigenous Peoples themselves has been of a working education in human rights and fundamental freedoms that over the years has been acquired by the thousands of Indigenous Peoples that have attended its sessions. Indigenous Peoples from around the world gather every year to meet and to network and to learn and teach, to grow and develop. It truly has become a United Nations of Indigenous Peoples.

Mr. Chairman, we are hopeful that the United Nations Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples will soon be adopted. This council also should have a mechanism to deliberate on its progress.

We urge this Council to extend the Mandate of this working group and its experts, and to maintain the original dates and duration for 2006, in order to assure the presence of indigenous participants, particularly beneficiaries of the voluntary fund who have already secured their visas and paid for their passage. A great many United Nations activities, such as UNITAR training are also tied to the original dates, 31 July to 4 August..

We also urge this Council to allow the WGIP to finish and publish its outstanding standard setting activities on Cultural Heritage and on Free, Prior and Informed Consent. The Council should invite the Sub-Commission and the WGIP and Indigenous Peoples to deliberate and recommend to this Council how they can best serve the interests of human rights and the mandate of this Council.

For all my relations,

Thank you Mr. President