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**STATEMENT BY**

**AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE**

**OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**DR GJ MTSHALI**

**Under agenda item**

**CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORT OF THE WORKING**  
**GROUP ON THE DRAFT UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION**  
**ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**AT THE**

**FIRST SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**27 JUNE 2006**

**Check against delivery**

Mr President,

South Africa wishes to convey its sincere gratitude to the Working Group on the Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and in particular, to the Chairperson, Mr Luis Chávez, for his efforts to ~~to~~ oversee the process of elaborating the Draft Declaration.

South Africa welcomes the report of the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Working Group and takes note of the progress made thus far. In this regard, we believe that this Declaration, when adopted, will go a long way in restoring hope to those marginalised and vulnerable ~~of our society~~ *within a world community* that their rights will now be recognised.

South Africa reiterates the call made by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, at the opening session of the Human Rights Council to consider the adoption of this instrument. It is important that the Council begins its work with issues that will have tangible outcomes.

Mr President,

It is indeed true that "sufficient time" needs to be accorded to all stakeholders to express views and comment on the Chair's proposed text, however South Africa does not envisage the reopening of the text following eleven years of negotiations.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our support for the process and wish to see its successful conclusion.

I thank you.