

Interactive Dialogue - HRC 2nd Session

Questions for Stephen J. Toope, Chairman Rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances Tuesday, 19 September 2006 (am)

1. Canada would like to take this opportunity to underline the important role of the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances and the contribution of its members, including Chairman Rapporteur Toope, to the elaboration of a legally binding instrument for the protection of all persons from enforced disappearances. Canada is pleased to have supported the adoption of the International Convention for the Protection of all Person against Enforced Disappearances by the Human Rights Council during its first regular session in June 2006. We believe it will provide effective protection from this grave human rights violation, which continues to be perpetrated around the world. How do you think the WG can best complement this new instrument? How can the international community further support changes at the national level to ensure accountability for the most serious human rights crimes, including the crime of enforced disappearances?

2. We also welcome the new format for reporting adopted this year by the Working Group, to focus greater attention on countries where disappearances have been reported to the WG. We believe it provides a broad portrait of the situation and a useful tool to help the Working Group make its work more effective and efficient. We also wish to highlight the impressive success this WG has known under your chairmanship, in clearing up the backlog of cases. We do share however your concerns that in some countries underreporting is due to restrictions on the work of civil society on this issue – restrictions that are sometimes based on different forms of discrimination. How can the international community best help strengthen these groups?

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Questions for Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples Tuesday, 19 September 2006 (am)

1. Canada takes this opportunity to reiterate our support for the important role of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples and to commend Mr. Stavenhagen specifically for his efforts in working with the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and other UN mechanisms toward the mainstreaming of indigenous issues in the UN system. The Special Rapporteur has now visited eight countries, presented a number of general and thematic reports and responded to a large number of communications. Could the Special Rapporteur speak to some of the challenges and obstacles he faces in fulfilling his mandate, and how they might be alleviated?
2. Of the eight countries visited by the Special Rapporteur thus far, indigenous populations are officially recognized in seven. How to define “indigenous” has been a topic of debate for some time and, I understand, a challenge in the dialogue amongst development agencies. How is the Special Rapporteur seeking to improve formal access to communities and acceptance of his work by States and their agencies in regions where alternate terminology is used or distinctions simply denied?