

Human Rights Council
Third Session
8 December 2006

Statement by Les Malezer, Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action

This statement includes comments made on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples Caucus, in its press release for the International Day on Human Rights 2006 (10 December 2006).

360 million Indigenous Peoples throughout the world continue to struggle against crippling conditions of poverty, yet the United Nations General Assembly remains uncertain whether to support human rights for Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous Peoples are clearly the poorest and most oppressed societies in the world. This poverty continues because governments refuse to acknowledge indigenous title to lands and indigenous self-determination.

Last week the United Nations lost credibility when the General Assembly's 'Third Committee' used a procedural vote to prevent final adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The 'no action' motion set back twenty-three years of work to complete the human rights standard. This work involved states, human rights experts and Indigenous Peoples participating together in negotiations.

This action discredits the UN's reputation on human rights and cast doubt upon the integrity of the UN. It brings attention upon those states who seek to suspend the adoption of the Declaration and the reasons why they are doing so.

The United Nations is sending mixed messages about whether the promotion and protection of human rights is a genuine major objective of the new Millennium.

The creation of the Human Rights Council has been a positive step. The Human Rights Council decided, by an overwhelming majority, to adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, at its first session in June 2006.

Indigenous Peoples repeat our call for the immediate adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, without amendment, by the UN General Assembly.

The Indigenous Peoples Caucus calls upon the United Nations and, in particular, the member states to double their commitment and efforts to promote human rights as the major pillar for the global development, equally, of all peoples.

We respectfully ask that those states who say they were not aware of the drafting of the Declaration since 1984, and who do not understand the Declaration, to seek technical advice from the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, or other authoritative sources, so that the United Nations' adoption of the Declaration can proceed without further delay.