

## **United Nations Human Rights Council, Third Session**

**29 November – 8 December 2006**

### **Agenda Item 2: Follow-up to decisions of the Human Rights Council**

#### **Oral intervention by International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development and the International Indian Treaty Council**

**Presented by Willie Littlechild (IOIRD), Friday December 1, 2006**

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Thank you Mr. Chairman and Respectful Greetings to all delegations.

The Human Rights Council demonstrated the priority it attached to the rights of Indigenous Peoples by adopting in its resolution 1/2 29<sup>th</sup> June 2006, the text of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and transmitting it to the General Assembly. The Human Rights Council also, by this action, honoured the recommendation of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues and the Global Indigenous Caucus together with the members of the Council who voted in favour of the historic decision.

This decision signalled a very important world call for respect. It affirmed the recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples being equal to all other peoples. The UN Declaration presents a new framework for “partnership for action and dignity” in concert with Treaties and the Second International Decade.

The Secretary General “stressed that human rights forms the third of three pillars” of the United Nations. The work and role of this Council is vital for defending and upholding the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples and indeed all Peoples within the UN system. We respectfully call upon all UN member states to support the vital role and place of this Council. Every effort must be made to promote and strengthen its role and stature.

We therefore register our profound concern with the way in which an historic human rights decision by the first session of this Council (in only its second decision) was undermined by the General Assembly’s Third Committee in New York on Wednesday of this week, November 28, 2006. The adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was a positive forward looking and courageous step by this Council, a product of 24 years of work in the United Nations, which was celebrated by Indigenous Peoples as well as many states around the world.

Unfortunately, the Council’s stature, dignity and its future effectiveness as a robust, authoritative and independent guardian of human rights within the UN system was called into question by some states for reasons that were purely political and had nothing to do with human rights. Their concerns with the content of the Declaration were mischaracterizations, misinterpretations, and posed as procedural matters intended to block its progress. After pledging to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights in seeking election to this Council and as reminded by Secretary General Kofi Annan on 19<sup>th</sup> of June, some member states voted very differently in the Human Rights Council and in New York.

Notwithstanding all this, Mr President, our spirit is not broken. We now look forward to working together with the Human Rights Council and States on a new path within a framework of dialogue and cooperation to focus on implementation. We respectfully recommend implementation of your decision to adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with a program of action.

We urge you, with the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, to begin a process of working groups or seminars on mechanisms for effective implementation. This would be a significant and ongoing contribution by this Council to the protection of Human Rights.

Thank you.