

**United Nations Human Rights Council,**

**6th session, 18 September 2007**

**Oral Intervention submitted by the International Indian Treaty Council, an NGO in Consultative Status to the UN Economic and Social Council**

**Agenda Item: Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food  
Presented by Ms Claire Charters, International Indian Treaty Council**

The International Indian Treaty Council welcomes the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. As he states, it should be a source of great shame for the States members of the United Nations, and particularly of the Human Rights Council that the commitments made at the World Food Summit and World Food Summit +5, as well as the Millennium Summit in 2000 and the Millennium Development Goals, hunger has increased to 854 million people and has been rising for over a decade, every year since 1996.

Our delegation is reminded that the World Food Summit explicitly relied on the World Trade Organization to eliminate hunger, and again repeated this reliance at the World Food Summit +5. With more than 6 million children dying every year before their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, it is clear that this reliance on a world system that only serves economic elites is very much misplaced.

It is also clear to our delegation that the brunt of the scourge of hunger, the scourge of humanity, is borne by Indigenous Peoples in all regions of the World, including the North, where in the United States, a man from Bangladesh has a longer life expectancy than a Indigenous man from the Rosebud Reservation in the state of South Dakota.

We understand that in the North, the right to food is questioned as a human right. But there is no greater affront to human dignity than persistent hunger. To allow hunger can and should be considered persistent and pervasive inhumane and degrading treatment. It leads to the disequilibrium and destruction of communities and leads to all sorts of negative social consequences. To allow the rich and avaricious to determine the well being of the poor can only lead to greater hunger as reflected in the Special Rapporteur's report.

For Indigenous Peoples the right to food encompasses not only their ability to feed ourselves, but our ability to maintain our cultures, languages, customs and traditions. It includes our right to our traditional knowledge. It certainly includes our right to our ancestral lands. All of these things are reflected in the denial of the right to food for Indigenous Peoples. Our lands and territories are in the path of a world economic system that only grinds to dust those in its path with impunity, with no humanity, no regard for the human rights and human dignity of all of the human family, including Indigenous Peoples.

We note that the Special Rapporteur places special emphasis on the rights of children. We also note that he describes economic migrants as refugees, consistent with the Protocols that offer refuge for

the persecuted. Mr. Chairman, we bear witness to entire Indigenous communities abandoned by our brothers and sisters in Latin America, who have made the difficult choice between remaining on their ancestral lands and watching their children starve, or to move North for the promise of an economic existence worthy of human dignity. Abandonment of our lands is not an easy choice to make. But neither is the alternative of persistent hunger and malnutrition.

We thank the Special Rapporteur on the right to food for his excellent report. We note that he his report includes not only situations from the South, but from the North, namely the Pit River Tribe of Northern California and the Yupic of Alaska, United States. There, the State is allowing pollution to destroy the ability of Indigenous Peoples to provide for their own subsistence and creating not only hunger but chronic illness in the process.

We urge all States to heed this report and recommendations. We urge the States to respond to his communications, that a dialogue can begin leading to the elimination of this scourge of humanity based not on the good will of the World Trade Organization and World Bank Group institutions, but on human dignity, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all peoples.

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

for all my relations...