

**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: Former Working Groups, 18 September 2007  
Presented by Ms Claire Charters, International Indian Treaty Council**

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First, indigenous peoples from all regions of the world would like to express their sincere appreciation to the Council, states, NGOs and indigenous peoples for their highly instrumental role in facilitating the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was passed by the General Assembly on Thursday. This provides an enormously important basis for the Council's further work in relation to indigenous peoples' rights.

Indigenous peoples have been participating at the United Nations for over 30 years and value the opportunity to speak with their own voice here.

During the 6<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in May, 2007, the Global Indigenous Peoples Caucus adopted a second consensus resolution regarding the Council's work, mandates, structures and mechanisms pertaining to the rights of indigenous peoples. The core elements of the recommendations include:

- maintaining and strengthening the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples;
- the inclusion of a regular agenda item addressing indigenous peoples' rights in the ongoing work of the Council; and
- the inclusion of experts on indigenous peoples' rights in the Council's Advisory Committee.

Remembering that the Working Group on Indigenous Populations would have celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, the Global Caucus also strongly endorsed the establishment of an Expert Group on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the successor to the Working Group. The Expert Group would provide specific, practical and pragmatic advice to the Council on the best means to implement and mainstream human rights and simultaneously afford indigenous peoples a voice in Council. It would cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous peoples and the Permanent Forum, and itself be made up of experts on the rights of indigenous peoples.

The Expert Body would provide regular reports to the Council, assist the Council to organize its work relating to indigenous peoples' rights and facilitate expert seminars on relevant issues.

Indigenous Peoples have presented their proposals for an Expert Group on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at every session of the Council over the last 14 months and have engaged with states on this issue, including at an informal session just this lunch-hour.

To progress, we propose that states and indigenous peoples meet informally in a technical meeting,

to be organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, before the December session of the Council to finalise the resolution establishing the Expert Group on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We expect the resolution to pass in December this year, as is required by the Council and are working closely with states to achieve this.

We look forward to continuing our work with states to constructively devise a successor to the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, and working with the Council to provide greater protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples.

Thank you.