



UNITED NATIONS

Press Release

Adoption of Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples a historic moment for human rights, UN Expert says

Geneva, 14 September 2007: *The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, Dr. Rodolfo Stavenhagen, issued the following statement on the occasion of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 September:*

Indigenous peoples can rejoice following the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration constitutes a fundamental landmark for indigenous peoples, and it represents their important contribution to the construction of the international human rights system.

The outcome of more than two decades of negotiations between Member States, representatives of indigenous peoples and human rights organizations, the Declaration reflects a growing international consensus concerning the content of the rights of indigenous peoples, as they have been progressively affirmed in domestic legislation, in international instruments, and in the practice of international human rights bodies.

In recent years, indigenous peoples have become key actors in the defense of human rights. Indigenous peoples have made their voice heard both within the States in which they live, at the United Nations and other international fora. The testimonies they have long given of the historical violations of their human rights have impacted upon the conscience of many nations.

The Declaration reaffirms that indigenous peoples, both individually and collectively, enjoy all rights already recognized at the international level, and that the special circumstances of their existence as discriminated peoples and long dispossessed of their ancestral resources, demand particular attention by States and by the international community.

Indigenous peoples' ancestral lands and territories constitute the bases of their collective existence, of their cultures and of their spirituality. The Declaration affirms this close relationship, in the framework of their right, as peoples, to self-determination in the framework of the States in which they live.

The adoption by the General Assembly of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a step forward in the consolidation of international

mechanisms for the protection of the human rights of all persons, to which all Members of the Organization are committed.

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