

Statement

Statement by Executive Director Ann M. Veneman on the approval of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

“UNICEF welcomes the General Assembly’s approval yesterday of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and congratulates UN Member States on taking this important step.

“In particular, UNICEF welcomes the recognition in the Declaration that indigenous children sometimes need special assistance to realize the rights – to an education and to protection from exploitation, discrimination and harm – that all children possess.

“There are approximately 370 million indigenous people in the world. The majority are children and adolescents. In many instances, they are among the most vulnerable and marginalized members of their societies. In Latin America, for example, social and economic indicators for the majority of indigenous communities are far below national averages.

“It is important that this Declaration is now followed by the development and implementation of policies and programs to address the poverty, discrimination and exclusion that has often limited the opportunities available to indigenous children.

“UNICEF hopes that States’ renewed commitment to the rights of these vulnerable children, contained in this Declaration, will open the way for stronger relationships among Indigenous Peoples and their respective States, and will build even greater momentum towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.”

About UNICEF

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world’s largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

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