

CEDI - P. I. B.  
DATA 104, 93  
COD. IAD 00064

Comissão Criação Parque Yanomami  
CCPY São Paulo

**REPORT OF  
A CONSULTATION  
BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES  
AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS  
AND OTHER AGENCIES**

(held at United Nations Headquarters, New York,  
on 11 December 1992 in conjunction with the  
ceremonies launching the  
International Year of the World's Indigenous People)

## Preface

The meeting of which this is a summary record was conceived by its organisers to be a way of taking advantage of the presence in New York of many indigenous peoples' representatives from around the world. They came together to mark the official launching of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People which took place at the 47th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Human Rights' Day, 10 December 1992.

Recognising that the formal launching ceremonies could only - for reasons of restrictions of time and protocol - provide a forum for bringing to worldwide attention a limited range of indigenous peoples' concerns, the organisers considered that it would be useful to arrange for a consultation between indigenous representatives and development, human rights and other agencies, programmes and organisations which might provide a more adequate framework for the discussion of development issues, especially operational activities, in favour of indigenous peoples. The latter's representatives responded enthusiastically to this proposal and, indeed, requested that what had originally been envisaged as a two-to-three hour informal meeting be extended to a full day's duration.

It was recognised from the outset that such a consultation could only be of value if it were understood to be but another small contribution to a much broader process of United Nations' System and worldwide efforts to address the wide range of human rights, economic, social, cultural and political issues confronting both indigenous peoples and the societies and States with which they have been, and continue to be, in contact and often conflict.

The Consultation of 11 December 1992 did not pretend to deal with all of the aspects of such contact and/or conflict. Its main objective was to attempt to define ways in which indigenous peoples could take a greater part in the development process both in terms of benefitting from it and influencing its implementation. Inevitably, therefore, much of the discussion dealt with the situation of indigenous in developing countries. Representatives of indigenous peoples in developed countries, however, repeatedly stressed that while the countries in which they lived might be described as "developed", their people had scarcely benefitted from social development and in many cases found themselves in situations little better, if at all, than those of their brothers and sisters in the Third World.

A very strong sense emerged from the meeting that a great deal remained to be done by the United Nations, its specialised agencies, the development banks and other international bodies to help redress the historical and present discrimination against indigenous peoples. The commitment to do so and the

solidarity between agencies and indigenous peoples and amongst the world's indigenous peoples themselves was powerfully symbolised by a Great Circle formed in the U.N. Conference Room inside which indigenous and non-indigenous representatives, under the direction of an elder of the Hopi tribe spoke of their hope and their commitment. The organisers of the Consultation, too, express the hope that the Great Circle of solidarity will grow even stronger and that the conclusions of the meeting will assist, even if only in a small way in accomplishing this goal.

New York, December 1992

**NGO Committee for the  
International Year of the  
World's Indigenous People**

**ILO Liaison Office  
with the United Nations**

**United Nations  
Centre for  
Human Rights**

## Summary Record and Conclusions

1. The Consultation between Indigenous Peoples and Development and Human Rights Agencies took place on 11 December 1992 at United Nations Headquarters. It was organised by the U. N. Centre for Human Rights and the ILO in co-operation with the NGO Committee on the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. A list of participants is attached (Annex 1). Governments were invited to send observers and a number did so. Representatives of several non-governmental organisations having a particular interest in indigenous issues were also in attendance. Plenary sessions were held from 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Direct bilateral discussions between indigenous and agency representatives took place between 2:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

2. The meeting was co-chaired by Ms. Grace Smith of the Navajo Nation, Mr. Oren Lyons of the Onondaga Nation and Mr. Ian Chambers, ILO Representative to the United Nations. With the agreement of the meeting, the co-chairs have prepared the present report and conclusions of the Consultation.

3. While it was recognised by both the organisers and participants that a one-day meeting was entirely insufficient to address all of the issues, the feeling was generally expressed at the end of the consultation that it had been a useful exercise and that future meetings within the U.N. System bringing together indigenous and agency representatives might wish to use it as a basis for further discussions both in terms of its conclusions and recommendations and with reference to its format. The possibility which the latter offered of following up specific issues in direct bilateral contacts was a feature particularly appreciated by many participants.

4. The following paragraphs set out the main issues of general purport raised and proposed actions or approaches to deal with them.

### Issue No. 1: Access

5. One of the major problems for indigenous people in relation to intergovernmental development agencies is to have access to them in order to

- (a) obtain information on their programmes;
- (b) provide information on the real situation of indigenous communities;

- (c) present proposals and suggestions for activities in favour of indigenous communities; and
- (d) contribute to the design, implementation and evaluation of projects and programmes by foreseeing, measuring and describing their impact on indigenous peoples.

**(a) *Obtaining information***

6. Although a fair number of publications exist explaining the aims, scope and procedures of the development programmes of the United Nations, its specialised agencies, the World Bank and regional development banks (Inter-American Development Bank, African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) and the new Latin American and Caribbean Indigenous Development Fund, a great many indigenous leaders and representatives do not have easy access to these both because they are not physically available to them and because they are not published in languages that indigenous decision-makers understand.

7. To help address this problem, the International Labour Office (ILO) is preparing a handbook, to be issued before the end of 1993, which is designed to provide at least basic information on the development bodies, policies and procedures available to indigenous people.

8. The consultation considered it important also that each agency designate both at the headquarters and, where possible, local level, an official who could serve as a focal point for inquiries from indigenous representatives. Such officials should have responsibility not only for referring the indigenous inquiry to the right place but for following-up to ensure that a reply is obtained within a reasonable time because one of the present difficulties identified is the slowness of communications, especially from agency headquarters.

9. As regards indigenous focal points at the local level, they should receive written instructions from their headquarters regarding their obligations to assist indigenous people in obtaining information and in countries where there is a significant indigenous population, they should familiarise themselves with at least the major indigenous language.

10. The U.N. Department of Public Information (DPI) and the U.N. Information Centres in different countries (UNICs) should take an active role in regard to channelling information on the U.N. System to indigenous people.

**(b) *Providing information***

11. Several agency representatives referred to the difficulty they experience in obtaining information on the real situation of indigenous people.

The best source of such information is clearly indigenous communities themselves and they should make increased efforts to ensure that such information is provided. In the course of the consultation, a number of indigenous representatives passed in very informative publications and periodicals containing a great deal of information about the situation of their peoples. These should certainly be sent to the focal points in the various agencies at local and international levels. Technical assistance could perhaps be provided by some of the agencies to help train information officers amongst indigenous representatives.

12. More broadly, there is a clear need for more information on the indigenous peoples to be circulated at national, regional and international levels, both for adults and in school curricula. This question is dealt with at greater length under Issue No. 3 below.

**(c) Presenting proposals**

13. Since much of the framework of official development assistance is governmental, and since many of the governmental officials dealing with indigenous peoples have themselves very limited (if any) access to negotiations on development programmes, indigenous peoples often find it very difficult to get their programme and project proposals for financial and technical assistance into the development planning process.

14. In some cases, indigenous representatives can have direct access to agency representatives at the country level (e.g., UNICEF, ILO, the Latin American and Caribbean Indigenous Development Fund) but in other cases, established procedures required by Governments or by the agencies themselves may impede such access.

15. One way to meet this difficulty would be to request UN Resident Coordinators to convene meetings of their development colleagues (which could, and should, also include representatives of bilateral assistance programmes) to discuss with indigenous representatives directly their needs and priorities. A special effort in this regard should be requested during the International Year of the World's Indigenous People and, because the Year is one declared by a General Assembly resolution, it may be easier than before to arrange such a dialogue. It has to be recognised that in certain countries for political or other reasons, Government counterparts of development agencies may be reluctant for such meetings to take place but in such cases, headquarters officials may be requested to encourage Governments to modify their position and, where appropriate, such meetings could be organised at the regional level to remove participants from the particular pressures of the national political scene.

16. In connexion with this issue, the consultation agreed that special attention needs to be paid to proposals from indigenous groups resident in developed countries in which most development agencies are not represented and for which they do not have assistance programmes. Although it is the responsibility of national governments in such countries to provide for the needs

of the entire population, including indigenous peoples, since they are presumed to have the financial means to do so, international development agencies may be able to help, for example, out of small-project special funds. (The representative of the World Bank alluded to such a possibility.) Developed countries (like developing countries) which have ratified the ILO Conventions (Nos. 107 and 169) on indigenous and tribal populations are under certain obligations in international law with respect to such assistance and the ILO supervisory bodies can assist by drawing this obligation to the attention of Governments at the appropriate level.

**(d) Programme and project design, implementation and evaluation**

17. It is fundamental that indigenous peoples should democratically decide on their mode of development. Indigenous peoples should be able to make their views known on what kind of development projects are undertaken in their regard, how those projects and programmes affect them, how they can be improved and what their real impact has been. This is the case not only for operations specifically targetting indigenous peoples but also for more broadly designed projects and programmes (e.g., in rural development, infrastructure, economic adjustment and environment) which may have as much or more effect on them than "indigenous" projects.

18. One way in which this might be achieved is by means of the type of meeting described in paragraph 15 above. Also agencies could make efforts to provide in project arrangements for the inclusion of indigenous representatives in planning, implementation and evaluation teams and discussions. At the local and international levels, panels of indigenous experts could be constituted to provide representatives for the evaluation of programmes. The representative of the World Bank informed the Consultation of his institution's intention to invite indigenous representatives to help assess the environmental impact of World Bank projects.

19. Whatever the level of participation or type of activity, however, the consultation stressed the fundamental importance of the requirement that "indigenous representatives" must indeed be "representative". They must be chosen by the indigenous communities concerned in order to be their legitimate representatives. While others, usually drawn from the ranks of the dominant society or from the officials of governmental or non-governmental organisations, have fulfilled an important and appreciated advocacy role for indigenous peoples in the past, the time has now come for the indigenous to speak their own thought with their own voice directly and not through intermediaries. There is a responsibility on agency officials dealing with indigenous issues to be sensitive to this matter and to ascertain the legitimacy and representativity of persons purporting to speak and act on behalf of indigenous peoples.

## **Issue No. 2: Training and Capacity-Building**

20. While many agency representatives at the Consultation referred to the need and responsibility of their own organisations to become more knowledgeable of, and sensitive to, indigenous issues, it was readily recognised that indigenous representatives need to acquire greater knowledge of the possibilities, constraints, policies and procedures of the agencies themselves which have a much wider mandate than indigenous issues.

21. To address this issue, longer-term capacity-building programmes need to be envisaged. One method would be for the agencies, especially in their departments most relevant to indigenous concerns, to provide internships of two to six months, during which indigenous interns would work alongside their agency counterparts. This would not only provide a valuable training possibility for indigenous persons but also help to sensitize agencies to indigenous concerns. In addition to regular funding programmes for such training, Junior Professional Officer (JPO) and Associate Experts programmes could also be used for the purpose, providing opportunities for indigenous people of both developed and developing countries.

22. Another important element could be the use of indigenous experts from developed countries, who have expertise in law, economics, finance, project preparation and evaluation, to assist indigenous brothers and sisters in developing countries. While it is understood that there are as great differences and varieties in cultures, legal and political systems and development priorities amongst the indigenous peoples of the world as there are amongst other societies, the solidarity and sensitivity of indigenous experts would predispose them to be more sensitive to indigenous concerns elsewhere. A good example of this is the Trilateral Agreement elaborated by the Algonquins of Barrière Lake (Canada) in dealing with the social, economic and political consequences of a major infrastructural project proposal. The experience gained by the indigenous representatives in these negotiations could be of great assistance to other indigenous groups faced with similar situations.

23. The need for indigenous people to have access to specialised training in fields such as tourism, genetic engineering and demographics was also highlighted.

24. Attention was drawn to the financial implications of the suggestions set out above. Solutions do not seem too difficult to find. The small-project funds administered by a number of institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank could be drawn on. The UN System itself has a variety of finances for training. Donor Governments committed to the aims of the International Year could also help in such training and exchange efforts. The Latin American and Caribbean Indigenous Development Fund also seems an ideal vehicle for such activities. Imagination, good will and a real commitment to contribute to the improvement of the situation of indigenous peoples worldwide can go a long way towards implementing these proposals.



### **Issue No. 3: Ignorance of Indigenous Situation**

25. For a host of reasons, some international, some not, there is a pervasive ignorance throughout the world of indigenous cultures, history, institutions, perspectives, needs and aspirations. One of the major objectives of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People is to start to overcome this unfortunate situation. One year is not nearly enough but a start can be made and must then be sustained.

26. Especially in countries with large indigenous communities, but even in those having few or none, efforts must be increased to introduce indigenous culture into school curricula. All too often, indigenous society is depicted, if at all, as backward, marginal or folklorically quaint. It is important to portray indigenous societies for what they really are, dynamic and significant parts of national society, building on a different set of institutions, knowledge and traditions which have their legitimate place in the national culture. UNESCO and the U.N. Department of Public Information have a particular role to play in this regard while indigenous people themselves have an obligation to provide the knowledge and assistance to them so that there can be a much broader and more balanced dissemination of understanding of indigenous cultures.

27. But if there is widespread ignorance about the positive aspects of indigenous cultures, there is equally far-reaching ignorance about the more sombre realities of indigenous life - the discrimination, the human rights abuses, the economic, social and political marginalisation which most indigenous societies endure. It is hoped that the occasion of the International Year will be used by the human rights agencies of the U.N. System, especially the U.N. Centre for Human Rights, the ILO and UNICEF to draw the attention of the broader public to the fact that so many indigenous peoples in both developed and developing countries do not enjoy the human rights enshrined in UN and ILO instruments on the subject.

28. As part of the activities of the International Year, a number of meetings and conferences are also planned which should help to increase knowledge of indigenous realities. One such will take place in the Philippines from 11 to 19 April 1993, and another is planned for later in the year in Central and South America.

29. The feeling was expressed that there had been insufficient media coverage of the launching of the International Year. It was suggested that if the Secretary-General himself gave a press conference on indigenous issues, this would contribute to increasing media attention to them.

### **Issue No. 4: Development Financing**

30. Up to now, indigenous peoples have benefitted very little in general from official development financing. They are frequently the most marginalised groups within national societies. They are often also the poorest. Yet, with a few

notable exceptions, in spite of the emphasis of many agencies' and institutions' programmes on poverty alleviation and the "poorest of the poor", the indigenous have been excluded, at best left to their own devices and at worst victims rather than beneficiaries of "development". In some cases, too, indigenous peoples have understandably shunned national, regional and local development programmes which threaten their identity, traditions and way of life.

31. As is the case with many marginalised groups, indigenous representatives dissatisfied, and usually quite rightly, with the performance in their regard of the Governments in the countries in which they live, turn to the United Nations. This sense that the United Nations should be more attentive to their concerns is heightened for many indigenous peoples because they, quite unlike other marginalised groups, consider themselves "peoples" or nations who should enjoy the right to self-determination which the United Nations recognises as a right of all peoples.

32. Such issues are both much more far-reaching and of such political complexity that they go beyond the scope and mandates of development agencies and institutions. They are being addressed in the framework of the U.N. Commission for Human Rights by the Working Group on Indigenous Populations which is preparing the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. They must be alluded to, however, in the context of the Consultation because they provide not only an indispensable background to understanding the positions taken by many indigenous representatives but also influence strongly the problems of access to and influence over the provision of development assistance.

33. Forced to compete with other groups, often more numerous and influential than themselves, indigenous peoples have little chance of gaining greater access to development financing in present conditions. It was in recognition of this fact that the Latin American and Caribbean Indigenous Development Fund was established not only to facilitate financing for indigenous programmes in that region but to give indigenous peoples an equal voice with Governments in determining the uses and priorities of the funds available. Other regions may wish to envisage similar initiatives.

34. On analogy with UNIFEM, the U.N. development fund for women, a specially dedicated U.N. development fund for indigenous peoples could be envisaged but the experience with the low level of contributions to the existing voluntary U.N. fund for activities for the International Year of the World's Indigenous People is scarcely encouraging.

35. It is not the secretariats of the international governmental organisations which determine the use of the funds at their disposal. Such decisions are the right and prerogative of the Governments which form them. The best the secretariats can do is to draw attention to the situation of indigenous peoples and encourage greater sensitivity and commitment to their cause. The agency representatives who participated in the consultation are committed to doing so.

### Issue No. 5: Relevance of the Consultation

36. Throughout this Consultation various proposals and suggestions have been made as to how to address concretely and with some hope of success at least some of the problems faced by indigenous peoples and the agencies in their interactions. The Consultation discussed the question of how these proposals and suggestions could be fed into the development system both during the International Year and subsequently.

37. It was decided that the report and conclusions of the consultation shall be brought to the attention of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Executive Heads of the programmes, agencies and institutions represented with the request that they consider them and take appropriate action.

38. It was decided that the report and conclusions should be transmitted to the next Technical Meeting on the International Year of the World's Indigenous People to be held in Geneva in July 1993.

39. It was decided that the report and conclusions should be sent to participants and Governments of the member States of the United Nations.

40. It was decided that at the meeting to mark the end and to evaluate the impact of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, and at any similar meetings at the national or regional levels, the extent to which the proposals herein contained have been put into operation should be examined.

41. There was unanimous agreement that the attention of the United Nations System and others to the situation of the world's indigenous peoples must not end with the International Year. The latter can and must only constitute a beginning. With respect to longer-term arrangements, the following suggestions were made:

- (a) to continue and expand the valuable reports begun by the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations on the situation of the world's indigenous;
- (b) to establish a U.N. Office for Indigenous Peoples;
- (c) to institute annual meetings at an appropriate level to review the fate of proposals for development projects submitted by indigenous people to explain why they were accepted or rejected and what progress has been achieved.

### Other Issues

42. Certain other issues were revised towards the end of the consultation. For want of time, they could not be discussed. They are nevertheless important and for that reason listed below:

- (a) Specific efforts should be made to explain to indigenous people their rights under international instruments, agreements and treaties. The particular example of intellectual property was mentioned.
- (b) There should be greater recognition of indigenous intellectual achievements such as appropriate technologies in infrastructure, agriculture, agronomy and ecology, and this knowledge and its repositories should be brought into the mainstream of development.
- (c) A special effort should be made during the International Year of the World's Indigenous People to secure the release of indigenous prisoners of conscience.

### **Acknowledgements**

43. The organisers of the consultation wish to thank most warmly the representatives of the programmes, agencies and institutions both for their very helpful participation in the meeting and for the useful background information notes which they provided. They also address particular thanks to the indigenous representatives for the efforts they made in preparing for the meeting and for the patience and consideration they displayed which enabled a maximum number of participants to intervene. Finally, a special expression of gratitude must be conveyed through the Secretary-General to his colleagues in the security and interpretation services who, in spite of the worst winter storm New York had experienced in many years, remained for the full extent of the meeting even though the essential services in the building had been shut down and the rest of the staff sent home.

Annex 1

**List of Participants**

**A. Agencies, Programmes and Institutions Represented**

U.N. Centre for Human Rights  
U.N. Department of Public Information  
U.N. Centre for Transnational Corporations  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)  
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

International Labour Organisation (ILO)  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)  
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

World Bank  
Inter-American Development Bank  
Latin American and Caribbean Indigenous Development Fund

Invited but unable to attend:

World Health Organization (WHO)  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)  
African Development Bank  
Asian Development Bank  
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

**B. Indigenous Representatives**

(List to be supplied by U.N. Centre for Human Rights)

# United Nations

Press Release

I4D00066

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Forty-seventh General Assembly  
Plenary  
Resumed 82nd Meeting (PM)

GA/8450  
10 December 1992

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REPRESENTATIVES OF WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ADDRESS  
ASSEMBLY AT START OF INTERNATIONAL YEAR

Human Rights, Self-Determination,  
Protection of Natural Resources Among Issues Raised

For years, indigenous people had been "mysterious minority populations", forgotten until their natural resources were needed, William Means, of the United States, President of the International Indian Treaty Council, told representatives of the world's indigenous people this afternoon as they continued the special ceremony to mark the launching of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People.

Speaking on behalf of the Indian people of the Western Hemisphere, he said that when their natural resources were needed, that meant additional loss of land for indigenous people. "We are the Palestinians of the Western Hemisphere", he declared.

Several speakers emphasized the importance of the International Year which, they said, sent a powerful message to those attempting to erase the indigenous identity in their own nations. A number of speakers called for the United Nations to establish a permanent high-level mechanism that would help to promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples, particularly the right to self-determination.

Bimal Bhikku, a Buddhist monk from the Chakma tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh asked that the Working Group on Indigenous Populations be made a permanent body, to travel freely and report its findings to the world media as well as to the United Nations.

Many speakers emphasized the respect and understanding that indigenous people had for the land, nature and its conservation. Although it was the habitats of the indigenous people that were being destroyed by deforestation, hydroelectric power stations and flooding, the overall effects were felt by the world at large.

(page 1a follows)

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General Assembly Plenary  
Resumed 82nd Meeting (PM)

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Press Release GA/8450  
10 December 1992

Representatives of indigenous communities from the Arctic; Western and Eastern Europe; North, Central and South America; Asia, Africa, and Australia and the Pacific also addressed the ceremony. They were Chief Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of the Onondaga Nation; Marcial Arias Garcia, President of the Kunas Unidos por Nabguana; Evdokia Gaer, Secretary-General, International League of Indigenous Nations and Ethnic Groups; Lars Emil Johansen, Premier, Greenland Home Rule Government; Poka Laenui, President, Pacific Asia Council of Indigenous Peoples; and Chief Ovide Mercredi, Assembly of First Nations.

Other indigenous speakers who made statements were Jose Santos Millao, First Director, National Organization of the Mapuche People; Giichi Nomura, President, Ainu Association of Hokkaido; Lois O'Donoghue, Chairman, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission; Moringe L. Parkipuny, Korongoro Integrated Peoples Oriented to Conservation; Noeli Pocatererra, Movimiento Indio por la Identidad Nacional; Tamati Reedy, National Maori Congress; Donald Rojas, President, World Council of Indigenous Peoples; Irja Seurujarvi-Kari, President of Nordic Sami Council; Mary Simon, Inuit Tapirisat of Canada; Anderson Mutang Urud, Sarawak Indigenous Peoples' Alliance; Davi Yanomami, Yanomami leader; and Thomas Banyacya, Hopi Elder.

Tomorrow at 3 p.m. the Assembly will continue its observance of the inauguration of the International Year with statements from Member States and action on a 40-Power draft resolution proclaiming the International Year.

When it meets at 10 a.m. tomorrow, the Assembly will take action on the question of equitable representation on, and increase in the membership of, the Security Council, the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East.

(page 2 follows)

General Assembly Plenary  
Resumed 82nd Meeting (PM)

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Press Release GA/8450  
10 December 1992

Launching of International Year of Indigenous People

Representatives of the world's indigenous people met this afternoon to continue the special ceremony marking the launching of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People.

OREN LYONS, Faithkeeper of the Onondaga Nation, speaking on behalf of the indigenous people of North America, said the current quest for peace of the indigenous people was an attempt to renew the previous way of life of the native people of North America -- the way in which they had lived before the people came from "over the sea". Freedom had been a way of life. Ceremonies had been held to honour the life-giving forces of the world. Generosity and equal sharing, respect, care and love for elders and children had been the basic teachings. They had been taught that there would come a time when the world would be covered with smoke and the water would no longer be clean. The issue of nuclear and toxic waste dumps was a great concern to the people he represented, he said. Over 300 treaties between the indigenous people and the United States and Canada had been violated.

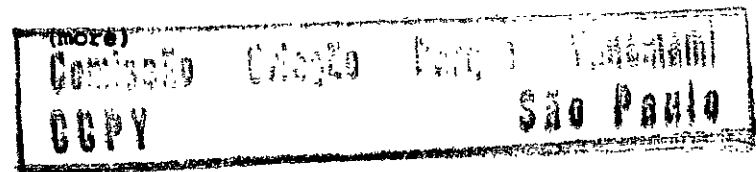
Human rights violations and confiscation of peoples' land had occurred within the violation of treaties. Also religious sites had been violated. Land was and had always been the issue for the indigenous people, he continued. All of the problems had come from across the sea and had worked to crush the nations of the indigenous people. Laws had been created to justify such actions.

He said he stood for the spirit of his people and declared their will to survive. The current generation had the responsibility of choosing a path of regeneration. Common sense, responsibility, brotherhood and peace must guide a way to regeneration.

MARCIAL ARIAS GARCIA, President of the Kunas Unidos por Nabguana, said the problems of his people should acquire the same significance as any of the other items on the agenda of the General Assembly. Moreover, indigenous people themselves should be active in that discussion. Instead they had been underrated, colonized and manipulated.

He called for the establishment of a United Nations office for indigenous affairs. Indigenous peoples in El Salvador and Nicaragua had been involved in peace negotiations to seek calm and order but no one had recognized their efforts or contribution. He also called for a special session of the General Assembly during 1993 to discuss sovereignty and self-determination for indigenous people. He called for a permanent seat at the United Nations for the indigenous people to be established.

After 10 years, he said the declaration on indigenous people had not been approved perhaps because of colonialist Governments. He then said the United Nations had not yet decided to establish a frank dialogue with indigenous people.





General Assembly Plenary  
Resumed 82nd Meeting (PM)

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Press Release GA/8450  
10 December 1992

BIMAL BHIKKHU, a buddhist monk from the Chakma tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, said his mother tongue was really the only thing left to him. He had already lost his land, his traditional way of life, family and friends. Today, 10 December, was a day that marked a resurrection of hope for millions of people designated as indigenous or tribal. Throughout Asia, the lives of indigenous and tribal peoples had become a daily nightmare, an ocean of suffering. It was only the intensity which varied from one country to another, from one moment to another. The problems had the same roots: non-respect for human beings and their rights. There was no respect for their culture, religions or traditions. The present situation of the indigenous and tribal peoples of Asia was not just a "problem": "It is a drama which dishonours the human condition, and changes must be made." He had not come to complain, he said, nor to seek out the guilty but to propose four actions to lessen suffering and to build peace.

The Working Group on Indigenous Populations should be made a permanent part to the human rights bodies of the United Nations, he continued. Its members should be able to travel freely to see the reality and to make their findings public to the world's media as well as to the United Nations. Currently, the truth of the situation was too often hidden. The only force available to indigenous peoples was truthful information.

Precise territory must be set out for indigenous and tribal peoples, he said. They did not want to be a "museum for anthropologists" but to be able to choose their own style and speed of development. The Working Group should encourage each parliament in Asia to guarantee through laws the right to land. The Working Group should also monitor the respect for those laws. The most precious resource was the human person. And the indigenous people wished to see the harmonious development of the human potential. In order to avoid armed conflicts, there should be training in non-violence as taught and practised by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. The Working Group should organize such training.

For indigenous people, he said, children were their only hope. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) should help implement the rights of the children of indigenous and tribal peoples -- especially the right to education. Most of their children were currently deprived of that right, through lack of schools, teachers and equipment. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) should mark 1993 by giving scholarships for higher education to indigenous and tribal youth. He went on to say: "We have so many many things to learn from others in the human community, and we can also share our values. We have to realize that we are interdependent: what you do has an impact on us; what we do has an impact on you."

He also said the children among the indigenous people were already carrying a very heavy burden: a financial "debt" to the richest countries. That burden was an injustice against those children. Indigenous and tribal peoples must also recognize their own past mistakes. For instance, they had not fully respected the dignity and rights of the women in our communities. The UNESCO should help to promote the rights of women in those societies. His

(more)

society shared a planet with other societies and all must learn to live together in harmony. Ignorance, fear, hatred and violence were the common enemies. The path of reconciliation between peoples must involve respect for justice. There was no way to peace. Peace was the way. The United Nations must promote a new human culture -- that of non-violence based on the respect of the person, truth and the rule of law.

EVDOKIA GAER, General Secretary of the International League of Smaller (Indigenous) Peoples and Ethnic Groups of the Russian Federation, said there were 34 indigenous peoples in the European and Asian parts of the Russian Federation alone. Their total population in Russia, according to census, exceed 440,000. In the last decade the natural growth of indigenous peoples amounted to only 16 per cent, and the number of Orochi, Enets, Oroki, Kets, Selcups, Sami, Nivkhi, Khanty, Chukchi remained practically the same. More than 17 per cent of the total population of smaller peoples of the Russian Federation were still living in yarangas and tents. Small population and low rates of its growth had put many indigenous peoples of Russia on the brink of biological disappearance.

At the same time, she continued, areas inhabited by indigenous peoples, were rich in unique minerals and raw materials, fuel and energy as well as biological resources. With balanced use of those resources, not only could indigenous peoples have lived in the wealth of a modern civilization, but the strength of Russia in general could have been increased by the plenitude of those resources.

For example, territories inhabited by 0.2 per cent of smaller peoples of the Russian Federation accounted for 6 per cent of the gross national product (GNP) and substantial proportions of total national output of oil, gas and timber. Resources of territories inhabited by smaller peoples played a special role in the formation of the national hard-currency fund. Those territories supplied the world market with cooper, nickel, timber, cellulose, fertilizers, furs and deer breeding products.

She said planning the development of the economic habitat of smaller peoples of Russia on the basis of the "descending strategy" concept had resulted in their economic impoverishment. The effect of the implementation of that policy had been especially ruinous for the indigenous peoples because they were small in numbers, greatly dispersed, and underrepresented in the State legislative body and the executive agencies. To avoid that tragedy in the life of the smaller peoples the Parliament of the Russian Federation had, for the first time in the history of the State, examined at its 1992 meeting the problems of social and economic situation in the regions of habitation of the indigenous peoples. It had unanimously adopted a decision on the urgent elaboration of a concept of the development of the indigenous peoples' territories, giving the highest priority to their will and desires.

She welcomed the establishment in Russia, this year, of the International League of Smaller Peoples and Ethnic Groups as a timely and important step. The charter of the League was based on the principles of sovereign equality of all its members, unanimity of smaller peoples and ethnic groups, voluntary implementation by all members of the League of all obligations assumed by

them, the peaceful settlement of emerging disputes, and rendering collective assistance to each other. The League would strictly observe the principles of the United Nations Charter.

She hoped 1993, which had been proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Year of Indigenous People, would give a strong impetus to the adoption by the Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation and the Commonwealth of Independent States countries, of several legislative acts which would define, in specific terms, the legal status of smaller peoples.

Premier LARS EMIL JOHANSEN, of Greenland, said that he spoke as leader of the Greenland Home Rule government and as representative of the collective Inuit communities in Greenland, Canada, the United States and Russia. Since 1980 they had worked closely together with the non-governmental organizations, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, to ensure that their views could be heard in the international society. He had played an active part to establish Greenland as a home rule territory in a free partnership with the other part of the kingdom to which it belonged. It was possible to change the world so that indigenous people -- without dissolving the national States to which they belonged -- could take their independent and rightful place on the world scene, which in current years was changing and intensifying democracy, freedom and international cooperation.

The greatest threat to that progress today was racism, he went on. The struggle for the indigenous peoples' rights was at the same time a fight against the fundamental evils of racism and ethnic cleansing. Even though those in the Arctic had been spared, the indigenous people were all too well acquainted with the concept of ethnic cleansing. It was a prerequisite for the fulfilment of the slogan of the year -- A New Partnership -- that all combat their own racism and learn to understand the beauty of the differences.

The United Nations had been the principal place where liberation from colonialism had been made possible for many peoples who today were called the "third world", he said. Through the United Nations decolonization programme, political freedom, justice and equality had been established for suppressed groups of people the world over. Today was also the United Nations Human Rights Day. Through various human rights instruments, the individual's right to an independent, just and equal life, regardless of race, religion or other affiliation had been established. The time had come when the international system must focus itself on establishing equality for those in the so-called "fourth world". The new Year opened all possibilities focusing on the untenable situation in which indigenous peoples the world over found themselves, and establishing the will and energy required to ensure a change towards justice, democracy and equality.

At a United Nations meeting in Greenland in September 1991, a number of experts produced a document with conclusions and recommendations about which rights States and the international community should fulfil and guard for indigenous peoples -- the so-called Nuuk Conclusions and Recommendations. That United Nations document included all the required elements needed to reach the goals of the United Nations Year. There was a necessity for

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indigenous peoples -- regardless of being locked into other peoples' nation States -- to become accepted as peoples in their own right. They did not wish to break existing nations up. But, they also did not wish to become assimilated into a culture, language or lifestyle, that was not theirs. They were specific peoples, regardless of not having an independent State.

He said the Year must emphasize indigenous people's right to self-determination with as wide a scope as possible within a united country. That required respect for their language, culture, land areas and work skills. The Year must focus on indigenous people's right to take part in the world economy with the resources they had and the background of the culture they represented. Most of them still had a hunter culture as their basic identity and could not continue to be passive to the world while their lifestyles were exposed to emotional and alienated campaigns against their renewable harvest of wild animals that nature provided for life's sustenance.

Indigenous people wanted their rightful place in the new world order, and hoped the United Nations Year would focus on the resources -- political, economic and commercial -- that could help them to ensure that they, as the only peoples who, until now, had been neglected -- received not just a new but also a true partnership with the globe's other peoples, he went on. The key word was "self-determination". The Inuit from Greenland, Canada, the United States and Russia had emphasized that many times both individually and collectively. One of the best ways the General Assembly could support that was to back up the work that has been done by the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

Indigenous peoples were therefore calling on all Member States, United Nations organizations and non-governmental organizations to support the very important declaration on indigenous rights, which should be dealt with at the next General Assembly meeting. That would give the Assembly an exceptional opportunity to close the International Year of the World's Indigenous People with a convention that would have meaning for all indigenous people in the future.

POKA LAENUI, of the Pacific Asia Council of Indigenous Peoples, said he took the call of the United Nations for a new partnership as a sincere and hopeful sign of according indigenous peoples a proper place in the common work for human progress. A partnership could never work if there were no common values or aspirations. The domination theme which had ruled the present evolutionary period of humankind must now be questioned. The "tug and pull" of forces under that theme had brought mankind no closer to spiritual development. In the quest to dominate, man had brought about rampant destruction of his immediate environment and displayed an insatiable hunger for further destruction in lands far from his own shores.

The new partnership must explore totally new modes of conduct built on the respect of all things to be. In building a foundation for a new partnership the elevation of property and economic values above those of human values must also be rectified. Development programmes must incorporate values of strong cultures, healthy people, respect for the elderly and protection for

the children, a pristine environment, an ethic of human rights and compassion within a society. Those values were important in the measure of the health of a society.

He said the United Nations evoked such high principles and yet included, within its membership, countries which consistently committed gross violations of human rights. He said there were atrocities occurring in East Timor, West Papua and Moluccas Islands, in the Chittagong Hill tracts and in the territories of the ethnic nationalities of Burma. There was insufficient action to protect the rights of people in those indigenous territories. Some Members of the United Nations even acted in partnership with the violators by continuing trade, military training and other support. There must be an end to such hypocrisy and firm action must be taken by the United Nations to end such atrocities.

Indigenous people, he went on, were anxious to participate in many areas of work with the United Nations. He asked that necessary steps be taken to facilitate their entry. Indigenous representatives should also have permanent places within the General Assembly to raise the special concerns from the various regions of the world.

WILLIAM A. MEANS, President of the International Indian Treaty Council, also speaking on behalf of the Indian people of the Western Hemisphere, explained that he came from the Oglala Band of the Lakota Nation, also known as the Sioux, a people of the Black Hills in the upper Great Plains of what was now the United States. His nation's legal relation with the United States was governed by a bilateral international treaty signed in 1868, which was similar to the other 370 existing bilateral treaties between the United States and Indian nations.

The International Indian Treaty Council was a non-governmental organization in Category II status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, representing 98 Indian nations and communities throughout the Americas. He said the emptiness of the Assembly Hall was significant in view of the long journey of the indigenous people to that place. This was the first time that Indian people of the Americas, and indigenous people throughout the world, stood before the Assembly to talk about their history philosophy and their own contributions to the development of world civilization. The only voice, the only color, absent from the community of nations was the Red Man of the Western Hemisphere.

Until now, he said, the Indian people of the Americas had had their place in world civilization determined by the so-called "modern", industrial nations and ranked by values which placed indigenous people at the very bottom of the human family. Today, the United Nations would begin to know them, not through the distorted history of the colonizers, but by seeing indigenous peoples as human beings with their own dreams and aspirations, their own value systems and their yearning for international recognition of their human rights, including the right of self-determination, which should now be recognised by

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the international community. In the case of the indigenous peoples of North America, he added that self-determination was already addressed through existing bilateral treaties.

He said that for years, indigenous people had been the "mysterious minority populations" scattered throughout the nations of the world, forgotten until their natural resources were needed, which in turn meant additional loss of land for indigenous peoples. "We are the Palestinians of the Western Hemisphere", he said.

Sovereign people of varying cultures had the absolute right to live in harmony with Mother Earth so long as they did not infringe upon that same right of other peoples. World concern must focus on all colonial Governments so that sovereign peoples everywhere should live as they chose. He said the indigenous peoples of the world still clung to their own culture, origins and indigenous roots, thus creating a new tension in the world. The fear of a return to multiculturalism and even tribalism, grew from a fear of the unknown by those who had been trained to fear that it was a part of their dark, uncivilized past which must be erased in the name of modernization and western civilization.

He said the International Year was even more vital because of the threat to the very physical and cultural existence of the indigenous people. It sent a powerful message to those attempting to erase the indigenous identity in their own nations.

The indigenous people understood the earth and knew that humans and other living things were related; that "the web of life is woven together, and that injury to one part of the web does injury to the whole". The Indians had never had missionaries. "We have never tried to make an eagle out of a crow", he said.

He asked the General Assembly to grant observer status to one or more Indigenous and Pan-Indian organizations so that they could play a constructive role in world peace and in international mediation, as well as contribute to the ongoing protection and advancement of indigenous peoples throughout the world. He asked that the Assembly give further study to the Treaty on Genocide and the Declaration on Human Rights, which had both closed the door to indigenous people. He further requested that the United Nations support a process that would lead to an international convention for the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples were in particularly vulnerable positions that existing legal norms seemed unable to protect. Such legal mechanisms would send a message to some existing Governments with records of human rights abuses towards indigenous peoples.

In the Americas, he said, there were more than 80 million Indian people in at least six countries in Central and South America the overwhelming majority was Indian. As democracy spread around the world it was inevitable that an Indian nation would finally take its rightful place in the family of nations.

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OVIDE MERCEDI, Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, speaking as the representative of 53 Indian nations in Canada, said it was important to all of humanity to end colonisation. Land, resources and lives had been lost by indigenous people. He denounced acts of violence against indigenous people, stating that the Governments of Peru, Guatemala and Colombia had carried out acts of genocide against the people of those nations.

While the Canadian Government had stated earlier in the day that the indigenous people of Canada had been included, he said it was not true that they had been consulted regarding the statement made by the representative of Canada. In Canada, the many treaties entered into between the Government and the indigenous people had not been fully implemented. While the Government had shown more interest than before, it had not taken complete action. He called on the Canadian Government to meet the needs of the indigenous people during the coming Year, to take direct action to solve problems and to honour the treaties. The Government should ensure that the indigenous people had the land, water and resources needed to support their economy. It should honour the indigenous people's right to self-determination and work to end their poverty.

All Member States should support a draft resolution to create a commission under the auspices of the Secretary-General to monitor human rights violations and to support the development of indigenous people. He called on Governments to meet directly with the indigenous people to end the era of dominance. He made those statements, he said, in a spirit of respect with the intention of forming new relationships with the Canadian Government and other Member States.

JOSE SANTOS MILLAO, First Director, National Organization of the Mapuche People, Chile, said his people nourished the hope that there would be a proclamation of a universal charter of the rights of indigenous peoples. The coming into being of a democratic system in Chile had enabled indigenous peoples to seek liberation and solutions for their great problems. They also sought further ratifications of Convention 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

His people knew that the realization of the aspiration for liberation was a universal task, he said. They valued the progress made by mankind in the last decade in the advancement of human rights and the protection of indigenous peoples. Since the adoption of Convention 107 of ILO, there had been a move towards recognition of the rights to self-government, land, cultures, a healthy environment and peace. All those rights were today recognized by humankind.

The struggle had entered a new and profound stage, he continued. Worldwide trends were emerging that affected the social, cultural and economic development of indigenous peoples. In Latin America, there was a growing recognition that democracy would increase the rights of indigenous peoples. The Constitutions of Latin America formally recognized the right to non-discrimination on the grounds of race, religion or sex. Nevertheless, the rights of indigenous peoples were being violated. In the last decade, ILO

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Convention 169 had been adopted. Indigenous people saw a ray of hope in that Convention, and Member States should ratify it immediately.

The indigenous peoples hoped that the coming year would provide an international forum for them and conclude with their liberation, he said. Mankind had a duty to recognize the vision of indigenous peoples and to guarantee their peace and security. The indigenous peoples of Chile hoped that the United Nations would aid development programmes there. He requested the appointment of a high-level commission to investigate the hydroelectric power station which threatened the existence of certain indigenous peoples in Chile. He wanted to pay tribute to the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for 1992, Rigoberta Menchu of Guatemala, who was herself a tribute to indigenous peoples, he said.

GIICHI NOMURA, President of the Ainu Association of Hokkaido, Japan, said the inauguration of the International Year of Indigenous People, today would remain deeply engraved in the memory of indigenous peoples. While the Ainu had formed a distinct society and culture in parts of Japan from time immemorial, up until 1906 the Government of Japan had denied its very existence. However, today the existence of the Ainu was being clearly recognized by the United Nations.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the land of the Ainu people was unilaterally appropriated by the Government of Japan, he said. Under the Japanese Government's assimilation doctrine, the language of the Ainu was banned, then traditional culture was denied, their livelihood was destroyed and the Ainu people became the object of oppression, exploitation and severe discrimination. They had been unable to continue their traditional way of life in their ancestral lands. Unfortunately, the Government in Japan had never taken the Ainu's rights as an indigenous people into consideration.

The Ainu called upon the Governments of Japan and the Member States to enter into "a new partnership" with indigenous peoples, he said. It was not merely a domestic issue. The overseas activities of Japanese corporations and the foreign aid efforts of the Japanese Government were having serious effects on the livelihood of indigenous peoples all over the world.

The Ainu requested that the United Nations move speedily to set international standards that guarantee the rights of indigenous peoples against various forms of ethnocide, he said. The Ainu urgently requested that the United Nations set up an international agency to clarify the situation of indigenous peoples, and put in place a mechanism for positive financial support of that agency by Member States.

The Ainu people hope to negotiate with the Japanese Government in order to implement the rights of indigenous peoples, including the right to self-determination, he said. The right to self-determination was not a threat to the national unity or the territorial integrity of Member States. What the Ainu sought was a high level of autonomy based on the fundamental values of "co-existence with nature" and "peace through negotiation". They did not seek to create new States with which to confront those already in existence. Their

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aim was to achieve, through their traditional values, the development and realization of a society in which all people could live together in dignity.

LOIS O'DONOGHUE, of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, said that when, in 1770, Captain Cook sighted what was then described as the great south land, the first Australians had been there already for more than 50,000 years. In 1788, Australia became a British penal colony, a dumping ground for the problems of the British Empire. The British declared Australia terra nullius -- "no one's land", and the indigenous people were deemed to have no legal rights to the land on which they had lived and cared for, for so long. There were no negotiations, there were no agreements, there were no treaties.

She outlined the history of her people and said that after 204 years, Australian law had finally recognized that indigenous people did own their land at the time of European settlement in 1788. That recognition was more than two centuries overdue. But it remained to be seen what its practical effects would be.

The world must accept that the history of indigenous people had been a history of oppression and the superiority of one race over another. Indigenous peoples sought acknowledgement by the international community that brutality had occurred, and its recognition of the continuous vitality of indigenous cultures. They asked no more than the basic human right of being given the opportunity to determine their own future. Only through self-determination could indigenous people begin to address the devastating impact of dispossession and dispersal without consent or compensation. In Australia, they were making progress. There was a greater Government commitment to self-determination for indigenous peoples.

She said the International Year of the World's Indigenous People enabled them to embark on a new journey of discovery -- a journey that could bring about an understanding of the fundamental nature of history, and the key to a shared future in justice and equality. It was a journey that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia wanted to share with their indigenous brothers and sisters throughout the world.

MORINGS L. PARKIPONY, of the Korongoro Integrated Peoples Oriented to Conservation, said he spoke on behalf of the African minority indigenous peoples. He was among the few who had annually attended the Working Group's meetings. Through that forum, he and others had learned a lot and had established crucial links with the extended family of indigenous peoples

Since the 1890s, colonial and independent African States had fought to obliterate the culture of indigenous peoples and dispossess them of their land. Land represented sustainable survival for them. Further, indigenous people were looked upon as backward and evolutionary relics, he said. Africa must abandon the fallacy that issues of indigenous people did not apply to it

European partitioners had carved up Africa without any regard for indigenous nationalities. As an example, the Masai had been split by both

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Germany and Britain into three different countries: Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika.

The 1960s, he continued, when most African countries were decolonized, promised great hope for the indigenous peoples. Yet the post-colonial era had seen the official European borders sanctified by the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Also, respect for the human rights of indigenous peoples seemed to be incompatible with aspirations of national unity. Indigenous peoples were still subjected to prejudice, discrimination and unilateral changes that affected their lives, and they were being dispossessed of their land. Their rights were being violated with impunity. Ironically, the abuses were being committed by Africans in the name of national unity.

NOELI POCATERRA ULIANA (Venezuela) asked what mankind would be without indigenous peoples and "blood ties to Mother Earth". Could we so quickly forget the thousands of years mankind's adaptation to the woods, deserts and the Arctic had taken? More than an alliance of thinking or intent, we needed an alliance with Mother Earth, not only for indigenous peoples, but for all peoples. The destruction of the indigenous peoples was the destruction of all mankind.

She said mistaken ideas of "development" and "progress" had condemned indigenous peoples to prostitution, alcoholism, dependency and loss of cultural identity. The role of elders must be restored as the model of moral conduct. The young must be restored to the role of providing the continuity of the races. The role of the family must be renewed. Western science had today become the instrument of the destruction of the planet.

The International Year would be meaningful only if the United Nations acted as the voice of Indian peoples, she went on. Member States, through their empty seats in the Hall, had demonstrated their lack of will to understand the case of the indigenous peoples. All the States of America should declare an emergency for Indian peoples. The various development projects for indigenous peoples must resist "the demonic claims of the world market". The International Year of 1993 must not become a mere "folkloric festival".

She said the Indian peoples were under attack from appropriation of their lands and from pollution. The United Nations should be mindful of the risk of the loss of the Amazon and other highly meaningful biologically diverse ecosystems. The fiction of "ecological protection" must not be allowed to facilitate the taking of Indian lands. Biological degradation was robbing indigenous peoples of both nourishment and dignity.

TAMATI REEDY, for the National Maori Congress, said his organization represented 45 affiliated tribes of Maori who were the indigenous people of New Zealand. He was also a representative of the second largest tribe, Ngati Porou, which would be hosting the first celebration and conference on 1 January, to mark the 1993 International Year of the World's Indigenous People. The conference would focus on the issue of sovereignty of indigenous people.

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Maori people, he continued, congratulated the General Assembly for launching that initiative with its theme "Indigenous people -- a new partnership".

He regretted that, at the time when that great event was being launched, moves were taking place in New Zealand to extinguish rights -- both Treaty and human rights -- of the Maori people of the land.

He described recent action by the New Zealand Government and court cases by the Maori against the Crown and said Maori fishing rights had been infringed. A bill had been rushed through Parliament to avoid the rising protest and opposition from the Maori people. He said the Maori people were saddened that their country's Government, which had recently won a seat on the Security Council, should act in utter violation of the rights of its own minority-indigenous group.

The fact that it did so on the eve of the 1993 International Year for the World's Indigenous People, was remarkable for its "callous disregard and insensitivity of indigenous rights". That action was reminiscent of the land confiscations and denial of Maori rights perpetrated during the colonial period of New Zealand's settlement by the British Crown in the last century.

DONALD ROJAS, President of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, said he supported every effort to further promote the right to self-determination. The United Nations system had made an important contribution to indigenous peoples in the last 20 years. He suggested that the United Nations consider establishing a high-level mechanism, such as a commissioner, to consider social and cultural issues relating to indigenous peoples. He noted that many countries had ratified convention 169 of ILO.

Indigenous peoples were still suffering from the colonial heritage, he said. He awaited with great expectations the creativity of indigenous peoples in 1993. He drew attention to some important events that would be held during the Year: the International Conference of Indigenous Peoples in Mexico in May, and the seventh General Assembly of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples in December.

IRJA SEURUJARVI-KARI, of the Nordic Islamic Council, said the Council represented the Saami Nation of Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. He expressed the hope and expectation that the International Year would serve to further the development of cooperation and respect for human rights which were necessary for indigenous survival.

The United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations had made good progress but had yet to complete its main task of drafting a new declaration on the rights and freedoms of indigenous peoples. The Working Group should continue with that exercise uninterrupted until meaningful and substantive standards emerged from the deliberations. The substance was more important to him than the date of adoption.

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The Nordic countries had consistently been active participants in the Working Group, he said, and he encouraged the Group to continue its considerations of Nordic issues, including in particular the land rights of the Saami in Russia and Sweden. The links between human rights, democracy and sustainable development had emerged with increasing clarity from the work of the United Nations on indigenous people's issues. Those links were being reflected in the standard-setting activities but they should also be reflected in the operational work of the United Nations system. The ILO had held inter-agency coordination meetings in that field and he endorsed the emphasis which was placed on development and partnership aspects in the Programme drawn up for the International Year. Indigenous people and their organizations must have the opportunity to participate effectively in all relevant activities at all relevant levels.

MARY SIMON spoke on behalf of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference of Canada, the Grand Council of the Crees of Quebec, the Metis National Council, the Native Council of Canada/Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development. She said she was an Inuk leader from Nunavik in northern Canada and was speaking on behalf of the majority of the indigenous peoples of Canada, and the International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development -- an international non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

She said indigenous peoples from every region were among the most vulnerable and exploited societies. They urgently needed the international protections that the United Nations could provide. Although the theme of the International Year was a "new partnership", the reality the indigenous peoples faced was one of exclusion and marginalization. Disposition of lands and resources, racial discrimination and other violations of their most fundamental rights still ravaged the lives of indigenous peoples in both developing and developed countries. On the eve of 1993, a number of State Governments still refused to recognize their collective and individual rights as "peoples". Those rights were inseparable from their cultures, way of life and relationship to their lands and territories. To deny that was to deny who they were. "We are no longer merely objects of international law; we are subjects of international law", she said.

The universal declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, which was being drafted, must not become the "lowest common denominator" of existing domestic law, she said. Instead, it should conform to the status, rights and perspectives of indigenous peoples themselves, whose concerns must now be addressed by the United Nations. The urgent concerns of millions of indigenous peoples could no longer remain a "footnote" to the overall work of the United Nations.

She recommended that the institutional framework of the United Nations be appropriately strengthened to recognize the increasing paramountcy of the issues affecting indigenous peoples; and the creation of a permanent advisory body within the United Nations, made up of representatives of indigenous peoples themselves. The international community must go beyond the inadequate

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protections provided for "minorities" under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Indigenous peoples must have the right to consent to development on indigenous lands, she said, as they were often the first to suffer the adverse social and environmental effects of ill-conceived development projects. States must respect indigenous peoples' right to peace and security. In Canada, for example, the contamination of indigenous lands from military activity was of vital concern. Treaties between indigenous peoples and States must be fully respected under international law. Indigenous treaties were not signed only as "domestic instruments" and must not be turned into domestic instruments after the fact. Respect for the right of indigenous people to self-determination was paramount.

The Inuit of Resolute Bay and Grise Fjord had been victims of forced relocation to support Canada's claim to northern sovereignty, she asserted. The Government of Canada owed an apology and compensation to these high Arctic exiles. The indigenous peoples in Quebec were now threatened by the possible secession of Quebec from Canada. The indigenous right of self-determination must take precedence under those circumstances.

On a more positive note, she said, the Inuit of Nunavut had moved closer to controlling their own lives through a recent comprehensive land claims agreement and political accord on division of the Northwest Territories. And the Metis Nation had agreed to a legislative accord with the Metis Nation Accord. During the Canadian constitutional negotiations, the recognition of the inherent right to self-government for all aboriginal peoples was an historic breakthrough. She called upon the Assembly to go beyond the "relatively insubstantial resolution" which had been proposed, and to endorse a plan of action which would address indigenous issues for the next decade.

ANDERSON MUTANG URUD, of the Kelabit people of Saravak, said that the Year of Indigenous People gave cause for hope, but at the same time, he wondered if it was receiving enough support, and enough funding. He said Saravak, a state in Malaysia on the island of Borneo, was less than 2 per cent the size of Brazil, yet was producing almost two thirds of the world's supply of tropical timber. If the current rate of logging were immediately reduced by one half, all primary forests in Saravak would be destroyed by the year 2000. The Government said it was bringing progress and development, but the only development that could be seen was dusty logging roads and relocation camps. The so-called progress meant only "starvation, dependence, helplessness, the destruction of our culture and the demoralization of our people." The Government said it was creating jobs for the people, but those jobs would disappear along with the forest. In 10 years the jobs would all be gone; and the forest which had sustained the people for thousands of years would be gone with them.

In return for defending their way of life, he continued, his people had been called greenies, pirates, traitors and terrorists. Their lives were threatened by company goons. Women were often raped by loggers who invaded villages. While the companies got rich from the forests, the people who lived there were condemned to poverty.

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He called upon the United Nations to do its utmost to assist all indigenous peoples which were threatened by their own Governments. It must urge Member States to restore the human and economic rights of the weakest and most vulnerable of the world's peoples.

He concluded, "Let 1993, the Year of Indigenous People, be a year of peace and hope, a year for the restoration of our bleeding forests and threatened cultures."

DAVI YANOMAMI, Yanomami leader from Brazil, said the indigenous people were defending their land from invasion. The white, rich capitalists said the lands were too big for the indigenous people. The mineral companies were looking for the riches from the indigenous people's land and continued to mistreat his people.

He said the Yanomami must live on their lands. The "Gold Diggers" had brought destruction. The indigenous people said nature must be preserved. Many places had already been destroyed, but his people wanted their land to be preserved.

The international community must help the minority people in Brazil and throughout the world, he said. He called on the Organization to protect his people. While many wanted to use the resources of the Amazon Forest, it must be preserved. The mineral wealth of the land must also be preserved. He called for respect for his people and for respect of the constitutional law that stated that the rights of indigenous people must be upheld. There had been a recent invasion by over 8,000 people into their land. He called on the Brazilian Government to remove all the invaders from their land.

THOMAS BANYACYA, Hopi Elder from the United States, said his spiritual leaders had an ancient prophecy that someday world leaders would gather in a great House of Mica with rules and regulations to solve problems without war "I'm amazed to see the prophecy has come true and here you are today", he said.

Hopi meant a peaceful, kind, gentle, truthful people, he continued. The traditional Hopi followed the spiritual path that was given to them by Massau'u, the Great Spirit. They had made a sacred covenant to follow his life plan at all times, which included the responsibility of taking care of the land and life for his divine purpose. They had never made any treaties with any foreign nation, including the United States, but for many centuries they had honoured that sacred agreement. Their goals were not to gain political control, monetary wealth or military power, but rather to pray and to promote the welfare of all living beings and to preserve the world in a natural way.

He said the world was "in terrible shape", humans poisoned their own food and water and air with pollution. Children were left to starve. Wars were still being fought. Greed was "a common disease". Now was the time, he

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added, to weigh the situation and choose the future. The United Nations should fully open the door for native spiritual elders to speak as soon as possible.

He said no one should be relocated from their sacred homelands in the western hemisphere. The United Nations talked about human rights, equality and justice, and yet the native people had never had a real opportunity to speak to the General Assembly until today. The United Nations and the Assembly should use their power and rules to examine and cure the damage people had done to the earth and to each other.

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