



21 September 2009

## ***United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples***

### **SUPPORTIVE STATEMENTS WORLDWIDE**

#### **United Nations**

“The Declaration is a visionary step towards addressing the human rights of indigenous peoples. It sets out a framework on which States can build or rebuild their relationships with indigenous peoples. ... [I]t provides a momentous opportunity for States and indigenous peoples to strengthen their relationships, promote reconciliation and ensure that the past is not repeated.”

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, International Day of World’s Indigenous People, 9 August 2008

“I look forward to further steps towards universal acceptance of this significant human rights instrument. ... My Office is committed to be a frontline advocate of universal acceptance and implementation of the Declaration ... Indeed, these rights [of indigenous peoples] are, and will remain, a priority area for OHCHR.”

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, Geneva, 10 August 2009

“The Declaration ... has been 20 years in the making. Its contents are drawn from the experiences of thousands of indigenous representatives who have shared their anguish and their hopes. ... As we stand at the brink of this historic decision by the General Assembly, it is the time to call upon member states of the United Nations to join as one and adopt the Declaration and thereby establish a universal framework for indigenous peoples’ rights, social justice and reconciliation.”

Message of Louise Arbour, then United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Rodolfo Stavenhagen, then Special Rapporteur, on the

occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, 7 August 2007

“The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples represents an authoritative common understanding, at the global level, of the minimum content of the rights of indigenous peoples, upon a foundation of various sources of international human rights law.”

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, S. James Anaya, Human Rights Council, 11 August 2008

“We see this is as a strong Declaration which embodies the most important rights we and our ancestors have long fought for; our right of self-determination, our right to own and control our lands, territories and resources, our right to free, prior and informed consent, among others. Each and every article of this Declaration is a response to the cries and complaints brought by indigenous peoples ... This is a Declaration which makes the opening phrase of the UN Charter, “We the Peoples...” meaningful for 370 million indigenous persons all over the world.”

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Chair, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Statement to the UN General Assembly, New York, 13 September 2007

“... the Expert Mechanism has an important role in promoting the rights affirmed in the Declaration, and in mainstreaming them into the Human Rights Council's overall efforts to promote and protect all human rights.”

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (then John Henriksen, Chairperson-Rapporteur), 1 October 2008

“[T]he United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ... affirms the basic rights of indigenous peoples ... Mandate-holders agreed that the effective implementation of the Declaration constituted a major challenge ahead, and decided to strengthen their efforts in that regard.”

Fifteenth meeting of special rapporteurs/representatives, independent experts and chairpersons of working groups of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, Geneva, 23-27 June 2008

### **Specialized Agencies**

“The Inter Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples’ Issues hails the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights on Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly ... The Declaration sends out a clear message to the entire international community, reaffirming

the human rights of the world's indigenous peoples. This landmark action of the United Nations bears political, legal, symbolic and moral significance ...”

Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues [IASG, made up of 31 agencies<sup>1</sup>], Statement on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted at its Annual Meeting in September 2007

“With the adoption of the Declaration, the UN has taken a major step forward in the promotion and protection of indigenous and tribal peoples’ rights throughout the world. ... The ILO welcomes the adoption of [the Declaration] and is committed to promoting it.”

International Labour Organization, “ILO standards and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Information note for ILO staff and partners”, n.d., distributed at the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, New York, April 2008

“... the new Declaration echoes the principles of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) and related Conventions -- notably the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Each of these recognizes the pivotal role of indigenous peoples as custodians of cultural diversity and biodiversity.”

Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, International Day of the World's Indigenous People, 9 August 2008

“... the World Bank welcomes the adoption of the “United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” by the United Nations General Assembly. ... The Declaration asks

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<sup>1</sup> As of 2008, the IASG includes 31 members. These are: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA); UN Department of Public Information (DPI); Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD); Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO); International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); International Labour Organisation (ILO); International Organization for Migration (IOM); United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); United Nations Development Program (UNDP, including Regional Initiative on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Development in the Asia Pacific); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO); United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT, including Indigenous Peoples' Right to Adequate Housing: A Global Overview); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO); United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR); World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO); World Health Organization (WHO); World Bank; Inter-American Development Bank (IADB); European Union; Fondo Indígena; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); Commonwealth Secretariat; United Nations University, Institute of Advanced Studies; United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS).

that the organs and specialized agencies of the UN system (of which the World Bank is one) and other intergovernmental organizations contribute to the full realization of the Declaration's provisions ..."

World Bank Statement, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, New York,  
21 April 2008

### **UN human rights treaty-monitoring bodies**

"While noting the position of the [United States] with regard to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ... the Committee ... recommends that the declaration be used as a guide to interpret the State party's obligations under the Convention relating to indigenous peoples."

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: United States of America*, 9 May 2008

"... the Committee regrets the change in the position of [Canada] in the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. ... The Committee recommends that the State party support the immediate adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ..."

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Canada*, 25 May 2007

"In 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which provides important guidance on the rights of indigenous peoples, including specific reference to the rights of indigenous children in a number of areas."

Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Indigenous children and their rights under the Convention*, General Comment No. 11, 30 January 2009

"The Committee ... encourages the State party to continue with its efforts to promote and implement the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Concluding observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Nicaragua*, 28 November 2008

### **Regional human rights bodies**

“The African Commission is confident that the Declaration will become a very valuable tool and a point of reference for the African Commission’s efforts to ensure the promotion and protection of indigenous peoples’ rights on the African continent.”

African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, “Communique on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”, Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, 28 November 2007

“The Rapporteurship on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), applauds the approval of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ... The IACHR Rapporteurship hopes that the recently approved UN Declaration will facilitate the prompt approval of the OAS Declaration so that the rights of indigenous peoples of the Americas can be recognized and protected.”

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, “IACHR Rapporteurship Applauds Approval of UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples”, 18 September 2007

### **Non-governmental organizations**

“Adoption of the Declaration sends a clear message to the international community that the rights of Indigenous Peoples are not separate from or less than the rights of others, but are an integral and indispensable part of a human rights system dedicated to the rights of all.”

Joint Statement by Amnesty International, Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers), International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, International Service for Human Rights, and Rights & Democracy, 14 September 2007

“... the [UN Human Rights] Council is responsible for promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights ... for all, without distinction of any kind ... It is therefore most fitting that this historic first session of the Council has the opportunity to propose to the General Assembly for adoption one of the most urgently needed and long overdue standards for the recognition and protection of human rights, the draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

Joint Statement by over 40 Human Rights Non-governmental Organizations, Human Rights Council, Geneva, 27 June 2006

“The World Conservation Congress ... ENDORSES the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* ... [and] DIRECTS Council to form a task force to examine the application

of the *Declaration* to every aspect of the IUCN Programme (including Commission Mandates), policies and practices and to make recommendations for its implementation ...”

International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Resolution of its  
World Conservation Congress, Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008

### **Indigenous Peoples**

“The Declaration is a framework for States to link and integrate with the Indigenous Peoples, to initiate new and positive relations but this time without exclusion, without discrimination and without exploitation. ... These rights in the Declaration are already recognised in international law, but they are rights which have been denied to Indigenous Peoples everywhere.”

Les Malezer, Chair, then Global Indigenous Peoples’ Caucus, Statement to the  
UN General Assembly, New York, 13 September 2007

“With the passage of the Declaration we herald the dawning of a new era for relations between pacific Indigenous Peoples and States, as well as UN agencies and specialized bodies. An era which we believe can now be established on a strong human rights foundation. The passage of the Declaration affirms the fundamental principle that human rights are universal and that the Indigenous Peoples and cultures of the Pacific are entitled to the rights and fundamental freedoms which have for so long been withheld.”

Pacific Regional Caucus Statement on the Adoption of the Declaration on the  
Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 13 September 2007

“[The UN Declaration] will be an instrument and tool which we will use to raise the awareness of the society at large on our rights and to make governments address the situation of indigenous peoples who have long been suffering from injustice, discrimination and marginalization. It will be an instrument that will be used [to] enhance further the empowerment of Indigenous Peoples.”

Asia Indigenous Peoples Caucus on the Occasion of the Adoption of the UN  
Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 13 September 2007

“The tragic and brutal story of what happened to us, especially at the hands of the governments, is well known. ... But today, with the adoption of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* by the United Nations General Assembly, we see the opportunity for a new beginning, for another kind of relationship with States in North America and indeed throughout the world.”

Statement of Indigenous Representatives from the North American Region,  
13 September 2007

« Les Peuples Autochtones doivent interpréter la déclaration comme une dynamique de reconnaissance des Droits des Peuples Autochtones qui viennent d'être inclus dans la grande famille des Droits reconnu par la charte des nations unies. Cet acte moral ne constitue pas un règlement définitif des violations des droits des Peuples Autochtones mais plutôt un pas qui favorise et ouvre les voies pour des règlements pacifiques de nos situations. »

[Unofficial translation: Indigenous Peoples must interpret the Declaration as a dynamic of recognition of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that are being included in the large family of Rights recognized by the Charter of the United Nations. This moral act does not constitute a definitive settlement of the violations of the rights of Indigenous Peoples but rather a step that favours and opens the way for peaceful settlements of our situations.]

African Indigenous Caucus, Regional Statement, New York, 13 September 2007

“The Inuit Circumpolar Council and Sami Council welcome this momentous occasion. For the first time, the world community has proclaimed a universally applicable human rights instrument in order to end centuries of marginalisation and discrimination, and to affirm that Indigenous peoples are peoples, equal in dignity and rights with all other peoples.”

Inuit Circumpolar Council and Sami Council, Statement of the Arctic Region, 13 September 2007

The Declaration recognizes our collective histories, traditions, cultures, languages, and spirituality. It is an important international instrument that supports the activities and efforts of Indigenous peoples to have their rights fully recognized, respected and implemented by state governments.

Then National Chief Phil Fontaine, “AFN National Chief applauds today’s passage of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – Recognizing 30 years of work in the making”, 13 September 2007

“... the *UN Declaration* is a triumph of achievement – a cause for great celebration. It is a contribution to justice and humanity. The international human rights system is being strengthened. ... The *Declaration* is the most comprehensive international instrument addressing the rights of Indigenous peoples. ... As distinct peoples, we now have a principled international legal framework that affirms our human rights.”

Then Grand Chief Matthew Mukash, Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee), 26 September 2007

“What a tremendous day. It’s all over now and we have in our hands a Declaration we helped construct and one on which we can proudly stand. Notwithstanding Canada’s “NO” vote they will have to be accountable against the Declaration’s standards. It cannot pick and

choose the human rights it wants. We should all be proud in our collective achievement. I was proud to be a part of our tremendous effort and achievement!"

Grand Chief Edward John, Co-Coordinator of the North American Regional Indigenous Peoples Caucus, New York, 13 September 2007

"The First Nations Leadership Council stands together with the indigenous peoples of the world in celebrating this historic achievement ... However we remain shocked and angered at Canada's refusal to support this important international human rights instrument."

Grand Chief Steward Phillip, President, Union of BC Indian Chiefs & Member, First Nations Leadership Council, "Passage of the UN Declaration an historic day for Aboriginal people in Canada: Canada's opposition a national disgrace and a stain on its international reputation", 13 September 2007

"The 13th of September 2007 will be remembered as an international human rights day for the Indigenous Peoples of the world, a day that the United Nations and its Member States, together with Indigenous Peoples, reconciled with past painful histories and decided to march into the future on the path of human rights. Unfortunately this is a bittersweet victory for Indigenous Peoples in this country ... Canada will have to work very hard to redeem itself and its position as an international leader of the protection of Human Rights."

Quebec Native Women's Association, Press Release, 14 September 2007

"The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will serve as a comprehensive international human rights instrument for Indigenous women, men and youth around the world. ... The adoption of the Declaration will allow Indigenous women and their families to infuse local human rights struggles with the power of international law and hold their governments accountable to international human rights standards."

International Indigenous Women's Forum, "Statement on the Occasion of the Adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples", 13 September 2007

"No one is rejoicing here in Manipur, in the northeastern territories of India, as many people began a fast yesterday against a racist military law that has seen thousands of indigenous persons held without charge, assaulted, killed, maimed, disappeared, tortured, sexually abused or extra-judicially executed since 1958 till today. While the present scenario is bleak for the surviving indigenous peoples, even critical for many, the declaration comes to us this autumn as a long overdue fresh wind with an elusive promise."

Roy Laifungbam, CORE Centre for Organisation Research & Education [Indigenous Peoples' Centre for Policy and Human Rights in India's Eastern Himalayan Territories], Manipur, India, 16 September 2007



“Although the challenge ahead is huge, the recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples by the United Nations is truly a cause for celebration. ... The DRIP is a major milestone, a vital point of reflection and affirmation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”.”

Anselmo Lee, Executive Director, Asia Forum of Human Rights and Development, Bangkok “A Milestone Achieved: the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly”, 14 September 2007

### **States**

“The need for legal protection of indigenous peoples’ rights ... is at the top of the international agenda. The recent adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples after 20 long years of delay provides confirmation of this fact; the Declaration is an instrument for legal, administrative and policy reform for the nations of the world.”

Peru, Information provided to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 12 February 2008

“The Government of Bolivia ... granted legal status to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the adoption of Act No. 3760 of 7 November 2007. ... Bolivia has therefore taken the lead in the field of indigenous rights, since it is the first country in the world to have taken this measure.”

Bolivia, Information provided to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 11 February 2008

“The Declaration constitutes one of the most significant achievements in this field of human rights, and we are confident that it will advance the rights and ensure the continued development of indigenous peoples around the world. The EU was encouraged by the wide support to the Declaration from Indigenous peoples’ representatives, as well as the large number of States. ... The challenge before us now, is to make sure that the indigenous peoples will in fact enjoy the rights recognised in the Declaration.”

Portugal (on behalf of the European Union), Human Rights Council, Oral Statement, Geneva, 26 September 2007

“The recent adoption by the General Assembly, by an overwhelming majority, of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will provide a new and comprehensive framework for the Special Rapporteur in pursuing the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples, numbering over 315 million around the world, constituting one of the world’s most

vulnerable groups. Indeed, the adoption of the Declaration requires the continuation of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, with a view to promote its implementation ...”

Egypt (on behalf of the African Group), Human Rights Council, Oral Statement, Geneva, 26 September 2007

“The Declaration contextualizes all existing human rights for Indigenous Peoples and provides therefore the natural frame of reference for work and debate relating to the promotion of indigenous peoples rights. ... In a Norwegian context, ... it strengthens knowledge and conscience about existing rights and thereby strengthens the implementation of indigenous rights.”

Norway, Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Geneva, Oral Statement, 12 August 2009

“The Declaration has been endorsed by both Government and Parliament of Greenland and it has raised expectations of citizens and interest groups. We need to take a closer look at our own compliance with this important (human) rights instrument.”

Greenland (Delegation of Denmark), Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Geneva, 11 August 2009

Today, Australia joins the international community to affirm the aspirations of all Indigenous peoples. ... The decades of work culminated in a landmark document ... that reflects and pays homage to the unique place of Indigenous peoples and their entitlement to all human rights as recognised in international law. ... Today, Australia gives our support to the Declaration. ... The Declaration gives us new impetus to work together in trust and good faith to advance human rights ...

Government of Australia (Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs), Parliament House, Canberra, 3 April 2009

### **Domestic human rights bodies**

“The passage of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on September 13, 2007 marked a milestone for the world’s indigenous peoples, and for the United Nations. ... The Commission will look to the Declaration for inspiration in our own work.”

Canadian Human Rights Commission, Public Statement, 15 February 2008

“ ... by supporting the UN Declaration, Canada would be affirming its commitment to the rights of its own indigenous peoples, many of whom have become increasingly alienated by the seeming inaction of governments in response to their plight. ... [B]y supporting the UN

Declaration, Canada would be further cementing the leadership position this country has long enjoyed in the global movement to respect human rights. Canada's otherwise respected human rights position would be sullied by continuing efforts to oppose the Declaration and slow down the General Assembly's approval of it."

Barbara Hall, Chief Commissioner, Ontario Human Rights Commission,  
Letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, 9 August 2007

"The Human Rights Commission today welcomed the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the United Nations General Assembly. This is an important milestone internationally in the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples ... the Commission is sorry that the New Zealand government felt unable to support the adoption of the Declaration over a few outstanding issues ..."

Chief Human Rights Commissioner Rosslyn Noonan and Race Relations  
Commissioner Joris de Bres, New Zealand Human Rights Commission,  
"Indigenous Rights Declaration to guide Commission work", New Zealand,  
14 September 2007

"There is a clear role for National Human Rights Institutions in implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the national level. ... Of most relevance are articles 38 (relating to the taking of appropriate measures to implement the Declaration) and Article 40 (which relates to access to conflict resolution procedures and the provision of effective remedies)."

Australian Human Rights Commission, Expert Mechanism on the Rights of  
Indigenous Peoples, Geneva, 11 August 2009

### **Parliament of Canada**

"That the government endorse the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 September 2007 and that Parliament and Government of Canada fully implement the standards contained therein."

House of Commons, Canada, *Motion*, adopted 8 April 2008 (dissent by  
Conservative members of Parliament)

### **Opposition parties**

"Stephen Harper's government has failed in its duty by voting against the adoption of the Declaration. ... The Conservative government is moving backwards on the Aboriginal question and is once again isolated on the international scene. It's deplorable."

Bloc Québécois, "The United Nations Adopts the Declaration on the Rights of  
Indigenous Peoples without Canada's Support", 13 September 2007

“Today’s vote marks the first time Canada has opposed a major human rights document. By arguing against the text it helped draft, and ultimately trying to defeat it, Canada has lost credibility among the community of nations concerned about the protection of human rights.”

Liberal Party, “Harper Government failed Canada with UN Vote”, 13 September 2007

“Canada had an opportunity to show the world it still has some relevance in international affairs as a catalyst to create agreement, instead of blocking action. ... voting in favour of the Declaration on Indigenous Peoples Rights would have been a confirmation of our history of conciliation and compromise and a signal that Canada intends to honour its obligations to indigenous peoples.”

NDP, “NDP appalled by Canada's vote against UN declaration on Indigenous peoples’ rights”, 29 June 2006

Endorsed by:

**Assembly of First Nations**  
**Amnesty International Canada**  
**Amnistie Internationale Canada francophone**  
**Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers)**  
**Chiefs of Ontario**  
**Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)**  
**Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami**  
**Inuit Circumpolar Council (Canada)**  
**KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives**  
**Native Women's Association of Canada**  
**Quebec Native Women**  
**Union of BC Indian Chiefs**