



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES INDIGENOUS VOICES

BACKGROUNDER

High-level Event on the 5th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Eleventh session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Thursday, 17 May 2012, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly in September 2007, marks a major milestone in the work of the United Nations and indigenous peoples' struggle for the protection and promotion of their rights.

Indigenous peoples, in partnership with governments and non-governmental organizations, played a critical role in the negotiation of the Declaration. They actively participated at the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations where the initial draft of the Declaration was prepared, together with Member States. This working arrangement was continued at the Ad Hoc Working Group of the UN Human Rights Commission (now the Human Rights Council) where indigenous peoples participated equally with Member States in the discussions to finalize the Declaration. After two decades of intense debate and discussion, these efforts culminated in the landmark adoption of the Declaration.


By 2010, the four states that initially voted against the Declaration had changed their position, marking an important milestone in reaching universal consensus.

The Declaration is the first international instrument to address both the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples related to culture and identity, education, health, employment, language and other areas. The rights recognized in the Declaration constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the world's indigenous peoples.

The Declaration affirms that indigenous peoples are entitled to all human rights without discrimination and that their collective rights are indispensable for their existence, well-being and integral development as peoples. It promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them. It also ensures their right to remain distinct and to pursue their own priorities in economic, social and cultural development. The Declaration encourages harmonious and cooperative relations between States and indigenous peoples and



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emphasizes that the Declaration is a standard of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect.

Since its adoption almost five years ago, the Declaration has informed the development of laws, policies and other measures that recognize and respect the rights of indigenous peoples in many countries. Furthermore, specialized agencies of the UN System, including at the country level, have enhanced existing programmes and launched new strategies to put into action the rights enshrined in the Declaration.

However, serious implementation gaps and challenges still require stronger efforts in order to enhance awareness of the Declaration and achieve the full and effective promotion and protection of indigenous peoples' rights.

The High-level Event convened by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will serve as a forum to celebrate the adoption of the Declaration, reflect on good practices and assess the Declaration's present and future roles in fulfilling the rights of the world's indigenous peoples.

Speakers will include the President of the General Assembly (tbc); H.E. Mr. David Choquehuanca, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Plurinational State of Bolivia; the Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the UN on behalf of H.E. Mr. Danilo Turk, President of Slovenia and Former Member of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations; Mr. Luis Chavez, Former Chairperson of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations; Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; the Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; representatives of UN Member States; indigenous peoples, and other participants.

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<http://www.un.org/en/media/accreditation> or call +1 212-963-6934 or 212-963-6937

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For more information on the eleventh session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, please see: <http://social.un.org/index/IndigenousPeoples.aspx>

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