

STATEMENT OF THE
INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR CONFERENCE AND SAAMI COUNCIL
June 27, 2006

Thank you Mr. President. My name is Dalee Sambo Dorrough and I am speaking on behalf of the Arctic Caucus, which represents the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic.

Our central message to all members of the Council is the urgent need to support the resolution presented by the Government of Peru calling for the adoption of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* at this session. Therefore, we respectfully request that states soundly reject any proposal by Canada containing vague objectives regarding re-opening discussions on both process and substance.

Our representatives have played a pivotal role in the drafting of this Declaration. We have advanced positions and proposals that are consistent with international law and human rights standards.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for a minority of states, who still repeatedly insist upon double standards in the context of our fundamental human rights. Despite our proposals to accommodate state concerns, which are contained in the present Declaration, the United States, Australia and New Zealand remain entrenched in their extremism and absolutist interpretation of the text. It is widely understood that human rights are relative and not absolute in nature. Yet, the US, Australia and New Zealand opt to convey an alarmist perspective. They continue to be intent upon undermining this crucial human rights instrument.

Even more unfortunate, these states have now been joined by the new Harper government in Canada, which is also keen to demonize the Declaration. Canada has recently stated that the Declaration is a “radical” document. To date, Canada has not disclosed their specific concerns despite our repeated requests. Yet, they are asking states and Indigenous peoples to give them time to examine the text further through a potentially never ending and uncertain process.

Even a cursory review of their current policies and their respective human rights’ records would reveal to anyone that re-opening negotiations with these states would not lead to greater consensus.

We would like to thank those states who have expressed support for the adoption of the Declaration. It is imperative that Indigenous peoples and states remain vigilant against such an aggressive politicization of the Declaration both here in the Council and when it emerges at the General Assembly. Consistent with the objective of promoting human rights for all, we would urge all members to recall the actions of Canada during the Council’s universal periodic review.

In conclusion, we believe that through the Declaration, Indigenous Peoples and States can work harmoniously to improve relationships in a fashion that promotes the democratic principles that guide the United Nations.

Thank you.