

**United Nations Human Rights Council, 1<sup>st</sup> Session  
June 19 – 30, 2006, Geneva Switzerland  
Report of the Working Group on the Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
North America Region Indigenous Peoples' joint statement , edited as read  
Presented by Willie Littlechild, IOIRD, June 27, 2006**

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Thank you Mr. President, and greetings on behalf of some 700 Indigenous Peoples, First Nations and tribal governments and organizations from the United States and Canada.

In her opening statement to this body on June 19<sup>th</sup>, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Louise Arbour called upon the Council to “search for, articulate and implement a broad concept of universality of rights and freedoms...rather than cater to the narrow pursuit of national self interest and regional factualism”.

In the same session, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan reminded member states that “they have made pledges both to respect human rights at home and abroad”. We also recall that in the *2005 World Summit Outcome*, the Heads of State and Government committed themselves to collaborate with Indigenous peoples “to present for adoption a final draft United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples as soon as possible.”

Unfortunately, during this historic first meeting of the Council, a member and an observer state from our region have failed to honor these calls with their positions on the UN Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. They continue to promote a double standard when it comes to the rights of Indigenous Peoples, based on their narrow domestic, political and economic interests rather than the universality of human rights and freedoms for all Peoples.

The text proposed by the Chairman of the Intersessional Working Group on the UN Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Mr. Luis Enrique Chavez is the result of many long and difficult years of debate and discussion among states and Indigenous Peoples. Most of its provisions were agreed to by consensus of all parties.

In the few areas where consensus was not possible, the Chairs' text takes into account the concerns of states and third parties while also not diminishing the fundamental rights of Indigenous Peoples included in the text approved by the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities.

It is ironic and sad that, while pointing their finger at other states with accusations of human rights violations, these states continue to violate, extinguish and deny the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including Treaties and Treaty rights, Indigenous title to lands, territories and natural resources and the very same political, social, cultural and economic rights that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples seeks to recognize.

We emphatically urge the Council to reject any proposals presented at this session for an extension of the process, whether they are presented under the pretext of allowing more time to build consensus, to make additional changes to the text or by means of procedural maneuvering.

Based on our many years of experience in this process, as well as UN history regarding other standard-setting processes, we are convinced that further deliberation would not produce a stronger text of the Declaration. In fact, an extension of this process has every likelihood of moving both states and Indigenous Peoples further away from the consensus which has been built. It would not produce a Declaration that could meet the basic needs and minimum requirements of Indigenous Peoples and at the same time reflect the positions of the few states that refuse to accept the principles of equality, non-discrimination and the full recognition of rights for Indigenous Peoples.

We also stress to this Council that Indigenous Peoples will never accept the establishment of any process which seeks to exclude us or diminish our participation in debates that affect the lives of our families, our Peoples and our future generations.

We recognize that some Indigenous Peoples in our region and elsewhere continue to prefer a stronger text which would go further than the Chairman's text in its recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. We also recognize that a great many Indigenous Peoples from around the world see it as an acceptable compromise which upholds basic principles such as Treaty rights, self-determination, land rights and Free Prior and Informed Consent. These are necessary requirements for any Declaration to be considered an acceptable minimum standard for the survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous Peoples and a basis for honest partnership, improved relations and much-needed reconciliation between states and Indigenous Peoples.

**We therefore reiterate the call made to the Council by the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in its 5<sup>th</sup> session, to adopt in its first session the text as presented by the Chairman without amendment.**

We call upon this Council to stand in defense of the most marginalized and threatened of Peoples, and resist any attempts to be made into accomplices in denying rights for over 350 million Indigenous Peoples around the world.

Thank you, for all our relations.