



UN indigenous peoples expert commemorates first anniversary of adoption of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

13 September 2008, GENEVA.- The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, Mr. James Anaya, commemorates the first anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007. He calls upon States and the international community to renew their commitment to the Declaration and to make operative the rights enshrined in the Declaration.

On 9 September 2008, the Special Rapporteur presented his first annual report to the Human Rights Council, which includes an analysis of the Declaration. The report provides an account of the different measures that States, international bodies, civil society, and indigenous peoples themselves may take in order to contribute to the effective implementation of the human rights standards contained in the Declaration and other instruments.

In his remarks to the Council, the Special Rapporteur affirmed that the Declaration “takes basic human rights principles that are applicable to all and elaborates upon them in the specific historical, cultural, political and social context of indigenous peoples”. From this perspective, he explains that the Declaration is fundamentally a “remedial instrument,” aimed at overcoming the marginalization and discrimination that indigenous peoples systematically have faced as a result of “historical processes of colonization, conquest and dispossession”.

The Special Rapporteur states that the Declaration is also a reminder that these processes and their legacies worryingly persist and are reproduced today in various forms. The Declaration calls upon States and the international community to put an end to these processes and “take affirmative measures” to implement the human rights that indigenous peoples have been denied.

In commemoration of the first anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Special Rapporteur reaffirms his strong commitment to be actively engaged with Governments and other actors to closely monitor and evaluate violations of the rights of indigenous peoples and identify the underlying causes of immediate problems. He plans to be proactive in preventing such problems from arising or escalating by promoting specific action that builds on advances already made, and developing practical recommendations that are in accordance with the Declaration and other relevant human rights instruments.

On 1 May 2008, the Human Rights Council appointed S. James Anaya as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people for an initial period of three years. Mr. Anaya is James J. Lenoir Professor of Human Rights Law and Policy at the University of Arizona (United States).

For more information on the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, visit:
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/rapporteur/index.htm>

For media inquiries, please contact Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:
indigenous@ohchr.org
or call +41 22 917 9712