

## **PRESS RELEASE:**

# **Historic Milestone for Indigenous Peoples Worldwide as UN Adopts Rights Declaration**

New York, 13 September - Marking an historic achievement for the more than 370 million indigenous peoples worldwide, the General Assembly today adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the result of more than two decades of consultation and dialogue among governments and indigenous peoples from all regions.

"Today, by adopting the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples we are making further progress to improve the situation of indigenous peoples around the world," stated General Assembly President Haya Al Khalifa.

"We are also taking another major step forward towards the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all."

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warmly welcomed the adoption, calling it "a triumph for indigenous peoples around the world."

He further noted that "this marks a historic moment when UN Member States and indigenous peoples reconciled with their painful histories and resolved to move forward together on the path of human rights, justice and development for all."

Adopted by the Human Rights Council in June 2006, the Declaration emphasizes the rights of indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions and to pursue their development in keeping with their own needs and aspirations. It establishes an important standard for eliminating human rights violations against indigenous peoples worldwide and for combating discrimination and marginalization.

"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," said Ms. Vicky Tauli-Corpuz, Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The Declaration addresses both individual and collective rights, cultural rights and identity, rights to education, health, employment, language and others. The Declaration explicitly encourages harmonious and cooperative relations between States and Indigenous Peoples. It prohibits discrimination against indigenous peoples and promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them.

Calling the Declaration "tangible proof of the increasing cooperation of States, Indigenous Peoples and the international community as a whole for the promotion and protection of the human rights of indigenous peoples", Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Sha Zukang said that the UN "has fulfilled its role as the world's parliament and has responded to the trust that Indigenous Peoples around the world placed in it, that it will stand for dignity and justice, development and peace for all, without discrimination."

The Declaration was adopted by an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly, with 143 countries voting in support, 4 voting against (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) and 11 abstaining (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Samoa, Ukraine).

*For more information on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, please see:*

*<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/declaration.html>*

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