

# From the Indigenous Caucus at the United Nations:

The world's Indigenous peoples call on states from Asia and the Caribbean not to support the procedural motion to defer the decision on the Indigenous Declaration!

- The Namibian proposal tabled on behalf of the African Group suggests that the decision on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is, in effect, a non-action motion. If approved, it would have as its most likely outcome that the United Nations never adopts the Declaration.
- For historical reasons, African, Asian, Caribbean peoples and Indigenous peoples have always supported each other, generally and in various UN processes. It is with great sorrow that the Indigenous peoples note that despite our similar history, hardships and concerns, the African Group presently has a position that most likely will derail the entire Indigenous Declaration process.
- The Indigenous peoples of the world request that the Asian and the Caribbean states vote no to any proposal to defer the decision on the Indigenous Declaration.

Namibia , on behalf of the African Group is - in a proposed amendment to the earlier tabled Peruvian resolution – requesting that the United Nations General Assembly's decision on the Indigenous Declaration be deferred. The amendment is characterized as “friendly” and not of significant importance. Namibia says that they only need a little more time to be ready to support the Declaration. It is not explained, however, what activities are planned that would allow Namibia , Botswana and others to support the Declaration in a few months time.

The African proposal to the UNGA is – both in the way it is presented and in the effect that it would have - the same proposal that Canada made in June in an attempt to block the Human Rights Council from adopting the Indigenous Declaration. It is widely acknowledged that the intention behind Canada 's procedural move in the HRC was to derail the entire Declaration process. Further, even though couched in other terms, the Canadian proposal to the Human Rights Council was generally regarded as a non-action motion.

The “amendment” tabled by Namibia on behalf of the African Group is also in effect a procedural non-action motion, and should be referred to as such. The most likely outcome of their proposal – should it be adopted - would be to prevent the United Nations from adopting a Declaration that aims to include in the world community the over 370 million Indigenous people that all statistics show are among the most marginalized, discriminated against, and impoverished people in the world.

Explaining its material problems with the Indigenous Declaration, Botswana has stated that the Declaration, among other things, threatens the territorial integrity of states and gives a blanket recognition of tribal groups to full political and economic self-determination. Botswana further asserts that any group could claim indigenesness under the Declaration. The Botswana statement presents a striking similarity with previous interventions by Australia , New Zealand and the United States .

International legal experts and a vast majority of states have concluded that the U.S. , New Zealand and Australian interventions contain exaggerated, highly inaccurate and prejudicial interpretations of the Indigenous Declaration. These interventions have generally been regarded as being part of a strategy to induce unwarranted fears.

Indigenous peoples have immense sympathy for the African, Asian and Caribbean peoples. We condemn the crimes committed against the African and Asian continents, as well as the islands of the Caribbean , during the colonization era. We celebrate the formation of independent states in these regions. We reaffirm that former colonizing powers have an enormous debt to pay to former colonies. We support, as we have always done, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean in any such claim. Part of our support for these claims is that many of us have been through similar hardships. Several of us have first hand experience with how cruel colonization can be. It is therefore natural that Indigenous peoples have repeatedly supported the African, Asian and Caribbean positions in processes such as the WTO, WIPO and the CBD – as well as in the racism and racial discrimination debate.

Given this background, we hope and trust that the African, Asian and Caribbean countries will understand that Indigenous peoples need a Declaration that fully respects the dignity and equal rights of Indigenous peoples, and at the same time safeguards the genuine interests of states. It saddens us immensely that the African Group presently has taken a position that could have no positive outcome, but that poses a severe risk to the entire Indigenous Declaration.

We sincerely hope that the African peoples can find it in themselves to stretch out a hand to a group of peoples who have suffered from similar injustices as the African peoples have. We genuinely hope that African states will not continue to side with Australia , Canada , New Zealand and the United States , against us. If the African position does not change, the Indigenous peoples of the world call on our brothers and sisters in Asia and the Caribbean to vote no on any proposal to defer the decision on the Indigenous Declaration.

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