

4 November 2004

Fifty-ninth General Assembly
Third Committee
36th & 37th Meetings (AM & PM)

THIRD COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS SECOND DECADE OF WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE;
CONTINUES DISCUSSION OF RACISM, SELF-DETERMINATION

... The text on a Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (document A/C.3/59/L.30), approved without a vote and as orally amended, would have the General Assembly proclaim the Second Decade, commencing on 1 January 2005 and decide that its goal should be the further strengthening of international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as culture, education, health, human rights, the environment and social and economic development, by means of action-oriented programmes and specific projects.

In addition to requesting the Secretary-General to appoint the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs as the Second Decade's Coordinator, the Assembly would request him to establish a voluntary fund as a successor to the already-existing Voluntary Fund established for the present Decade. Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations would be urged to contribute to the voluntary fund, as would indigenous organizations and private institutions and individuals. Moreover, the Assembly would decide to continue observing the International Day of Indigenous People during the Second Decade.

Speaking in explanation before the draft's adoption, the representative of Ecuador, speaking on behalf of the Andean Community, said the first Decade had represented a valuable opportunity to become more aware of the situation of indigenous people and to redress their pressing problems. The Andean Community felt it important to proclaim a second Decade in order to step up efforts and further consolidate the progress made in the first. Indigenous people required additional attention for their development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals would be of benefit to them.

Speaking in explanation after the adoption, the representative of Australia said he had joined the consensus consistent with his Government's position that a second Decade should be coordinated so as to ensure that there was no duplication of efforts. However, Australia would have preferred that the language on the Working Group elaborating a draft declaration on indigenous rights, more clearly reflected that the Group's mandate would end with the present decade. His joining the consensus should not be interpreted as approval to extend the Working Group's mandate for the second Decade.

Also speaking after adoption, the representative of the United States reaffirmed that indigenous people around the globe faced serious issues. In some places they continued to be denied the opportunity to vote and equal access to the justice system. Discrimination in terms of political and economic opportunities also remained an impediment to their development.

The United States stood with indigenous people, who sought greater control over their destiny. The international community had worked for more than nine years to elaborate the draft declaration on indigenous rights, as it would advance the rights and interests of indigenous peoples. However, the draft must be completed; after a decade of negotiations all knew what was possible. It was not good to hold out the promise of benefits that could not be delivered. Thus, the United States did not favour extending the mandate of the Working Group, but felt it remained possible to conclude the negotiations on the draft before the next session of the Commission on Human Rights.

The United States had joined the consensus to highlight the plight of the indigenous, she concluded, as well as the necessity of concluding the draft declaration this year. The United States also understood that the voluntary fund would provide the source of funding for activities in the second Decade. Moreover, the use of the phrase "indigenous people" in the draft resolution did not imply any obligations under international law; these issues were being addressed in the negotiations on the draft.

The Committee then took note of the note by the Secretary-General on the Status of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations (document A/59/257), the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people (document A/59/258) and the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the implementation of the programme of activities for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (document A/59/277) ...

20 December 2004

Fifty-ninth General Assembly
Plenary
74th Meeting (PM)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS 61 RESOLUTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, SOCIAL,
HUMANITARIAN
ISSUES

Approves Texts on Human Rights Situations in Iran, Democratic Republic of Congo, Turkmenistan Acting on the recommendations of the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural), the General Assembly this afternoon adopted 61 resolutions and seven decisions ...

Among new initiatives enacted as a result of the Assembly's actions in other areas of its work, a second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People was proclaimed, to commence on 1 January 2005. By the text, the Secretary-General was requested to appoint the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs as the Second Decade's Coordinator, and to establish a voluntary fund as a successor to the already-existing Voluntary Fund. The Assembly also decided to continue observing the International Day of Indigenous People during the Second Decade ...

**Indigenous People

The report on the programme of activities for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, 1995-2004 (document A/59/500) contains one draft resolution and one draft decision. The draft resolution, concerning proclamation of a Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, and would have the General Assembly proclaim that Decade to commence on 1 January 2005. It would also decide that its goal should be the further strengthening of international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as culture, education, health, human rights, the environment and social and economic development. The Secretary-General would be requested to appoint the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs as the Second Decade's Coordinator, and to establish a voluntary fund as a successor to the already-existing Voluntary Fund established for the present Decade. The Assembly would decide to continue observing the International Day of Indigenous People during the Second Decade.

The draft decision would have the General Assembly take note of the notes by the Secretary-General transmitting the annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the implementation of the programme of activities for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (document A/59/277); the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people (document A/59/258); and the status of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations (document A/59/257) ...

**Organization of Work

There are also two texts related to revitalization of the work of the Third Committee and its provisional programme of work for the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

The first text (document A/C.3/59/CRP.1/Rev.1), which concerned Revitalization of the work of the Third Committee, would have the Assembly reorganize several of the items before the Committee for consideration ...

The text would also rename the item "Programme of activities for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, 1995-2004" as "Indigenous issues" ...

**Indigenous Issues

Subsequently, the Assembly took up the report on the Programme of activities for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, 1995-2004 (document A/59/500), adopting the included draft resolution to proclaim a Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People -- without a vote.

The Assembly then adopted the draft decision to take note of the reports on implementation of the programme of activities for the International Decade, the situation of human rights and fundamental

freedoms of indigenous people, and the status of the United Nations
Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations.