

United Nation Human Rights Council
Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 1st Session

October 1 – 3, 2008

Palais de Nations, Geneva Switzerland

Opening statement by the International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development, Assembly of First Nations Canada, Assembly of First Nations Treaty 6, & and 8 (Alberta) and the International Indian Treaty Council

Item 3: Implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 6/36 entitled “Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”

Oral statement presented by Chief Wilton Littlechild October 1st, 2008

On June 28th, 2006 I had the honor of presenting the proposal to the 1st session of the Human Rights Council to establish a “Permanent Expert Group on Indigenous Peoples Human Rights”. We want to formally thank the HRC members for their early, positive response evident in their adoption of resolution 6/36.

I am equally honored to congratulate all Experts appointed to this new Indigenous Expert Mechanism for all the same reasons that Special Rapporteur Professor James Anaya eloquently stated, in particular with regards to your selection as Chairperson.

Thank you also for the opening statements of the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights and the President of the Human Rights Council. They both underscored implementation and building upon the UN work previously undertaken.

When we were working on the establishment of this Expert Mechanism jointly with states in a process co-chaired by the Ambassador of Bolivia we ensured that its title would include and focus on the “rights” of Indigenous Peoples.

As already stated by the Deputy High Commissioner and HRC President Ambassador Uhomoibhi, the focus must now be on the UN Declaration and its full implementation. The challenge we now have is to find the best ways to ensure its application at the national and regional levels, to find practical ways as Canada stated, to improve the lives of Indigenous Peoples “on the ground”. Our delegations respectfully call on this new mechanism to consider how we can do this “in partnership”.

Some will argue that Indigenous Peoples have been studied to death and what we need are “partnerships for action in dignity”. Mr. President, “Treaty Rights are Human Rights” and therefore we urge you to consider your agenda items through the lens of Treaties and Agreements, as we believe their implementation provide solutions.

Finally, as to future work, we call your attention on the need to review and update:

1. The UN Treaty Study in view of the recent UN Expert Seminars; and
2. The UN Expert Seminars on Free Prior and Informed Consent

Our delegations present these to put “words into action” and echo your introductory comments Mr. Chairman “to address issues that are truly important to Indigenous Peoples”. We also join those who have called for a proposal to strengthen your mandate so as to be truly different from the former Working Group on Indigenous Peoples.

In conclusion, we pledge our continued support for your important work.

Hai Hai.