

Working Group on Indigenous Populations

The Working Group on Indigenous Populations, which was established pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1982/34 is a subsidiary organ of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and meets annually in Geneva, usually during the last week of July.

The Working Group has a two-fold mandate:

- to review developments pertaining to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples

- to give attention to the evolution of international standards concerning indigenous rights.

The Working Group consists of independent experts and members of the Sub-Commission - one from each of the geopolitical regions of the world. The Working Group is open to all representatives of indigenous peoples and their communities and organizations. The openness of the Working Groups' sessions, which also includes the participation of representatives of Governments, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, has strengthened its position as a focal point of international action on indigenous issues. The Working Group is today one of the largest United Nations forums in the field of human rights.

The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations was established in 1985, with the purpose of assisting representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to participate in the deliberations of the Working Group.

In that same year, the Working Group began preparing a draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, taking into account the comments and suggestions of participants in its sessions, particularly representatives of indigenous peoples and Governments. At its eleventh session, in July 1993, the Working Group agreed on a final text for the draft United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and submitted it to the Sub-Commission. The draft declaration is currently under review by the inter-sessional Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights on the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

At its 1996 session, the Working Group decided to consider specific themes. In past sessions the Working Group on Indigenous Populations has examined the themes of: health and indigenous people; indigenous peoples: environment, land and sustainable development; education and language; indigenous peoples and their relationship to land; and indigenous children and youth. From 23-27 July 2001 the Working Group examined the theme "Indigenous peoples and their right to development, including their right to participate in development affecting them.

Members:

The Working Group is composed of five experts from the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

- Mr. Yozo Yokota (Japan)
- Mr. Miguel Alfonso Martinez (Cuba)
- Ms. Christy Ezim Mbonu (Nigeria)
- Mr. Gáspár Bíró (Hungary)
- Mrs. Françoise Hampson (United Kingdom)

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