

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE DRAFT DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

TUESDAY 27 JUNE 2006

Mr President

The International Service for Human Rights is associated with the joint statement on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples presented by Amnesty International on behalf of 35 human rights non-government organisations. I speak now to ensure that the choice before the Council this week is clear.

Many States have suggested that further consultation on the draft declaration is necessary and desirable, while saying that they support the declaration. Canada has argued for amending the draft resolution presented by Peru. Canada is proposing a period of consultation and a report back to the Council's next session in September with a recommended process from there.

The Canadian proposal does not involve merely "a few more months", as has been suggested. On the contrary, it requires a process of a few more years. That is what the Canadian Minister for Indian Affairs indicated in a media interview on 19 June, "two more years of discussion". The next day, on Canadian television, he said of the declaration, "It's very sweeping. It's very radical. We don't support it ... We're simply saying send it back to the drawing board."

The choice for the Council therefore is not a choice between a declaration now or in a few short months. It is a choice between a declaration now or never. Whatever some States may say, it is a choice for or against the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

There will be no doubt in the minds of indigenous peoples, non-government organisations and international public opinion that those States that vote for the Canadian proposal are voting against the declaration.