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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
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REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION ON PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND  
PROTECTION OF MINORITIES ON ITS FORTIETH SESSION

Written statement submitted by the Four Directions Council:  
a non-governmental organization in consultative status  
(category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication  
which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council  
resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[2 January 1989]

PROGRAMME AND ACTIVITIES FOR AN INTERNATIONAL YEAR  
FOR INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

1. By its resolution 1988/37 of 27 May 1988, the Economic and Social Council recommended that the General Assembly proclaim an International Year of the World's Indigenous Populations. In its most recent report (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1988/24, Annex I), the Working Group on Indigenous Populations proposed that 1993 be set aside for this purpose, and the Sub-Commission then recommended, in its resolution 1988/19 of 1 September 1988, that 1993 be proclaimed the International Year for Indigenous Rights. Unfortunately the General Assembly was unable to act upon these recommendations at its forty-third session, but they met with considerable support and no substantive objections. A few delegations expressed an interest in seeing a more detailed statement of the kinds of activities contemplated for such a Year.

2. The purpose of this document is to describe a programme of activities which could serve as a basis for proclaiming 1993 an International Year for Indigenous Rights. This programme would utilize existing United Nations resources, and takes as its basic aim the promotion of indigenous rights through public education, and the strengthening of States' capabilities in the protection of indigenous people through advisory services in the field of human rights.

3. In assessing the appropriateness and timeliness of such a programme, Governments may wish to consider that the partial revision of the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957 (No. 107) of the International Labour Organisation will be completed and open for ratification in 1989, and that significant progress already has been made on a more far-reaching Declaration on Indigenous Rights, for consideration by the General Assembly perhaps as early as 1992. Indigenous rights have unquestionably become a "priority concern in the human rights field," within the meaning of Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67 (Guidelines for future international years), and important new international norms are likely to be established by or before 1993.

4. The following official United Nations observances would set the general tone for activities under the International Year for Indigenous Rights:

(a) A formal opening-day ceremony by the Secretary-General in New York, during the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly;

(b) A formal day of observance during the fiftieth session of the Commission on Human Rights, in Geneva;

(c) Issuance of commemorative stamps at New York, Geneva and Vienna by the United Nations Postal Administration, on the theme of "indigenous people-indigenous rights".

5. The following projects and activities would be undertaken by the Department of Public Information, in co-operation with the Centre for Human Rights and indigenous non-governmental organizations:

(a) Publication and dissemination of a poster series, highlighting the global diversity of indigenous peoples, and priority issues for indigenous people in the field of human rights (land, environment, culture);

(b) Preparation and publication, in at least three official languages (English, French, Spanish), of a 36-page handbook for indigenous people on relevant United Nations human rights bodies, instruments and procedures;

(c) Publication of personalized copies of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Indigenous Rights in at least 10 major indigenous languages such as Quechua, Guarani, Cree, Maori, and Sami;

(d) Production and wide distribution of at least one special programme in the DPI radio series, targeted to non-indigenous audiences;

(e) Production and distribution of a 20-minute videotape on the United Nations and indigenous rights, targeted for indigenous audiences, and designed to be dubbed in indigenous languages.

6. The following projects and activities would be undertaken by the Centre for Human Rights:

(a) Organizing regional workshops in the Americas, Asia, and Europe for indigenous organizations, responsible government officials and the secretariats of regional intergovernmental organizations on the international instruments applicable to indigenous people and practical means for implementing them;

(b) Convening a technical meeting with professional staff of the Centre for Science and Technology for Development, the Centre for Technical Co-operation for Development, the Centre for Transnational Corporations, and the United Nations Development Programme, and with indigenous non-governmental organizations, to consider practical means of integrating indigenous rights norms in operational activities for development;

(c) Convening a technical meeting with professional staff of the Centre for Social Development on incorporating relevant statistical data on indigenous people in future Reports on the World Social Situation;

(d) Convening a meeting of the chairs of the treaty bodies in the field of human rights, to consider the extent to which new norms on indigenous rights can be reflected usefully and properly in their work under existing instruments.

7. Organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations would be requested to meet with technical representatives of indigenous non-governmental organizations for the purpose of strengthening consultative procedures, and increasing indigenous participation in their operational activities. Priority should be given to:

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)  
United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT)  
International Labour Organisation (ILO)  
World Health Organization (WHO)  
Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)  
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

It should be noted that the International Labour Organisation has already taken an initiative in this direction, which could serve as a model for indigenous participation in the regular activities of other specialized agencies.

8. Regional intergovernmental organizations should be invited to convene meetings with indigenous organizations to develop better consultative arrangements and indigenous participation in human-rights programmes as well as operational activities at the regional level. It should be noted in this regard that the Tenth Inter-American Indian Conference is scheduled to be held in 1990 in Argentina, which could enable the Inter-American Indian Institute and the Organization of American States to plan a major contribution to the International Year.

9. Although the situation in Africa is somewhat different, we recognize the important parallels between the historical experience and contemporary situations of Africans and indigenous peoples, and could also envisage the

usefulness of a meeting, in 1993 or earlier, between indigenous organizations and the Organization for African Unity, on institutionalizing technical co-operation in the fields of economic and social development.

10. To augment official projects and activities, the Secretary-General should invite interested Governments and non-governmental organizations to propose appropriate activities at the regional and national levels, which may be endorsed, without financial implications, by the United Nations. In addition, the Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Population should be authorized to receive, and disburse, contributions from Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, for specific projects during the International Year which are approved by the Trustees and by the Secretary-General.

11. Indigenous non-governmental organizations should be asked to contribute technical expertise in support of these activities, in particular translations into indigenous languages, and artwork for official posters, stamps and publications. Preference should also be given to indigenous organizations and professionals where contractual services must be procured by the Secretary-General.

12. In accordance with Part IV of the Council's guidelines for future international years, which require a follow-up evaluation, we suggest that the Council invite interested Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and specialized agencies, to submit written summaries of their activities during the International Year, and the measures they contemplate taking in the future to promote indigenous rights, by 1 June 1994, with the aim of producing an analytical summary for review by the General Assembly on its forty-ninth session.

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