



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/1/NGO/48
28 June 2006

ENGLISH ONLY

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
First session
Agenda item 4

**IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 60/251
OF 15 MARCH 2006 ENTITLED “HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL”**

**Written statement* submitted by the International Volunteerism Organization for
Women, Education and Development - VIDES, a non-governmental organization in
special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 June 2006]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the
submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Statement prepared by VIDES international in support of the Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

VIDES International (International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development) is an international association of voluntary service. It was formed in 1991 during the period following the World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. VIDES International is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC and is associated with the UN Department of Public Information.

<http://www.vides.org>.

VIDES International is a voluntary association formed in the aftermath of the 1991 World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China. Today, VIDES has programs and activities in thirty-(30) countries in the Americas, Asia, Africa and Europe.

The aims of VIDES International are:

- 1) Promotion and furtherance of the human rights of vulnerable groups - especially girls, youth, and women in developing countries;
- 2) Education, leading towards development and peace;
- 3) Education of women and children, particularly so-called at-risk youth and girls; and
- 4) Promotion of youth voluntary service.

To reach its objectives, VIDES International works through volunteers (primarily young people from the age of 20 years onwards), who we believe are essential “builders of peace and solidarity”.

VIDES has been involved in very basic and practical ways in supporting the human needs, human rights and human security of indigenous peoples residing in many of the countries where we work.

Throughout the world, indigenous peoples continue to suffer disproportionately in numerous areas of their daily lives. This includes increasingly being denied access to their traditional lands and resources; use of their native languages; access to adequate health care, education, food, shelter, and economic development; high rates of alcoholism and drug abuse; and other social ills. As is the case in many such environments, women are particularly negatively impacted by such events.

It is important to point out that indigenous peoples are not simply victims of human rights violations and abuse. Indigenous peoples represent a unique reservoir of knowledge, skills and values of tremendous benefit to all human kind. For example, many indigenous peoples maintain an important, but diminishing knowledge of the medicinal plants and other species that are invaluable. Unfortunately, this knowledge continues to be lost or stolen.

Indigenous peoples have a long history of serving as custodians of the natural environment. Their respect for “mother earth” is exemplified by the traditional Native American challenge that in making decisions today, the impact of those decisions should be should considered on “seven generations to come.” Such far-reaching thinking many would agree is essential for real sustainable development.

With this background in mind, we believe that States can and should do more towards fulfilling their obligations to promote, protect and respect human rights for all, including

the rights of indigenous peoples. We therefore urge the Human Rights Council to approve without further delay the current draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, submitted by the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the working group of the Commission of Human Rights to elaborate a draft declaration. While readily acknowledging that the current draft document is far from perfect, we believe that its approval will advance the process of establishing important national and international standards and norms for the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples.

Approval of the Declaration as one of the first acts of the Human Rights Council will send a strong signal that we may in fact be witnessing the dawn of a new era in the promotion and protection of human rights for all. The Declaration's adoption will acknowledge the possibilities of what is possible when States and indigenous representatives sit together as equals, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

We therefore urge its adoption by this body at the current session.

Thank you.

- - - - -