



COMMUNIQUE ON THE UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights welcomes the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the UN General Assembly on the 13th September 2007. This Declaration is a very important document for the promotion and protection of indigenous peoples' rights all over the world, including on the African continent.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples sets out the individual and collective rights of the world's indigenous peoples, calls for the maintenance and strengthening of their cultural identities, and emphasizes their right to pursue forms of development in keeping with their own needs and aspirations. The Declaration also explicitly encourages harmonious and cooperative relations between States and indigenous peoples: It prohibits discrimination against indigenous peoples and promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them.

With the adoption of the UN Declaration a giant step has been taken towards securing the survival of indigenous peoples and their unique cultures based on their own needs and visions.

The UN Declaration came about after more than 20 years of negotiations in the UN Human rights bodies, a process that involved genuine participation of indigenous peoples' themselves. The African Commission notes with satisfaction that the great majority of African states voted in favour of the Declaration and that not a single African country voted against this groundbreaking international human rights instrument. A total of 143 countries voted in favour, 4 against and 11 abstained.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is in line with the position and work of the African Commission on indigenous peoples' rights as expressed in the various reports, resolutions and legal opinion on the subject matter. The African Commission is confident that the Declaration will become a very valuable tool and a point of reference for the African Commission's efforts to ensure the promotion and protection of indigenous peoples' rights on the African continent.

Done in Brazzaville, the Republic of Congo, 28 November 2007