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The Permanent Mission of Canada
to the United Nations
at Geneva

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a Geneve

U N I T E D N A T I O N S
WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS
TWELFTH SESSION, JULY 1994

GENEVA

STATEMENT BY THE OBSERVER DELEGATION OF CANADA
DELIVERED BY

FRED CARON

July 25, 1994

Madam Chairperson,

Again the Canadian observer delegation would like to congratulate you on your re-election as Chairperson of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

Canada has had the pleasure of participating in the activities of the Working Group and of contributing to its deliberations almost since the beginning. During this time Canada has accorded the Working Group our most serious consideration of the issues before it.

Madam Chairperson, at this time I would like to emphasize that Canada continues to support the efforts of the United Nations to draft an instrument addressing the rights of indigenous people. We realize full well the need for such a document. We support the objectives of most provisions in the current draft, and the specific wording of many. Over the years we have expressed concerns with certain provisions of the draft declaration. These concerns have not been put forward as obstacles. They have been expressed for the purpose of ensuring that the principles in the draft are clear and easily understood as well as to ensure they can accommodate the diverse circumstances of indigenous people world-wide.

Canada notes that the new draft includes a provision that ensures that all rights under the declaration are available, without discrimination, to male and female persons, as we suggested last year. We would like to emphasize again the importance we place on such a provision and thank the Working Group for accepting our suggestion that it be included.

Madam Chairperson, the draft Declaration is now set to move to the next stage of consideration. Let me assure you that Canada will continue to work diligently in this process. We will, as we have in the past, strive to work with indigenous representatives and governments alike in order to find constructive solutions to the issues which remain. Cooperation between governments and indigenous organizations and respect for each others' views is essential to the progress of this draft Declaration.

Canada is fully supportive of continuous indigenous participation in the future stages of consideration of this draft. This is important both internationally as well as domestically.

In Canada, we have met with a number of the Canadian aboriginal groups interested in the future of the draft Declaration. In our view it has been a most promising start and augurs well for further meetings on all aspects of the Declaration. We encourage and very much hope that other governments will meet with the indigenous groups living within their territories, in order to hear their views and to develop solutions to issues of mutual concern.

In closing Madam Chairperson, let me once again thank you, and all the other members of the Working Group, for your efforts in the preparation of this draft Declaration. We realize that your task in reconciling the views of governments and indigenous people has not been an easy one. You should all be proud of what you have achieved in establishing a dialogue between indigenous people and governments. The Government of Canada assures you that it will spare no effort to ensure that this dialogue continues.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.

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