

community has started to take meaningful steps to address the urgent human rights concerns of indigenous peoples. In 1989, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169), which is intended to provide international protection to indigenous and tribal peoples.

With a mandate from this General Assembly, and with the direct participation of indigenous peoples, the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples is drafting a Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. To be effective this document must not become the "lowest common denominator" of existing domestic law. Instead, it should conform to the status, rights and perspectives of indigenous peoples themselves, whose concerns must now be addressed by the United Nations.

To advance this effort, we need individuals like Dr. Erica-Irene Daes, Chairperson of the working group. We applaud her dedicated efforts to defend the rights of all peoples. Dr. Daes is an untiring advocate on behalf of our rights at the United Nations.

We believe that the urgent concerns of the millions of indigenous peoples throughout the world can no longer remain a "footnote" to the overall work of the United Nations. At the very least, the "Rights of Indigenous Peoples" must finally gain a place on the formal agenda of the Commission on Human Rights.

More fundamentally, we recommend the following:

- that the institutional framework of the U.N. be appropriately strengthened to recognize the increasing paramountcy of the issues affecting indigenous peoples.

and

- the creation of a permanent advisory body within the United Nations, made up of representatives of