

On balance, Canada believes that in light of the progress made, it is appropriate for the General Assembly to request that the draft declaration be brought forward in 1993, the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, for initial consideration at the inter-governmental level.

5/12

But even the introduction of a declaration of rights and freedoms for Indigenous People will not be enough to ensure their rightful place in the world family. There will be a continued need for the working group on indigenous populations, the organisation, which, under the able and sensitive leadership of its chair, Mme. Erica Daes, has contributed so much to the progress of indigenous aspirations to date. We shall want to consider carefully, with other governments and Indigenous People, what a new mandate for the working group might be.

Mr. President, the new partnership which we are launching here today, is something which Canada has been working to establish with the aboriginal people within its own borders for a number of years.

We still have a long way to go. We have suffered painful setbacks that have left scars which are only now beginning to heal. Still, Canadians take pride in our efforts and feel an ever stronger sense of commitment to building a new relationship based on equality, justice and mutual understanding.

In September 1990, Canada's Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, captured the spirit of this new approach when he introduced the government's native agenda in our parliament.

In describing the new relationship that Canada hopes to build, he issued a warning which offers a lesson to all the nations of the world as we embark on this important year. He cautioned that achieving our goal would take "creativity and perseverance ... courage to see things as they are; honesty to acknowledge them for what they have become, and the common resolve to correct them for future generations."

Canada's native agenda focuses on four main areas:

- accelerating the settlement of land claims;
- improving economic and social conditions on reserves;
- building a new relationship between aboriginal people and governments; and
- addressing the concerns of aboriginal people in contemporary Canadian life.

In many ways, 1992 was a red-letter year in progress towards these objectives.