

Workshop of indigenous journalists

A workshop of indigenous journalists was first proposed by the Sub-Commission in 1996. Consultations had indicated a need for such a gathering on the basis that: indigenous issues were not well covered in the mainstream press; sometimes the pictures of indigenous peoples' cultures were distorted; indigenous journalists stated that they often lacked the technical knowledge and the financial means to establish their own media; and indigenous journalists had an important role to play as intermediaries between the UN and indigenous communities.

The Workshop of Indigenous Journalists was prepared by the OHCHR and held in Madrid from 26 to 28 January 1998. Among the points made in the workshop report (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1998/6) were that: mainstream media tended to write about indigenous peoples only when there was conflict or tragedy and that otherwise articles often focussed on folkloric or stereotypical aspects; media in some countries reflected the dominant groups and this reality had to be borne in mind when considering the difficulties of access faced by indigenous peoples; the press plays a role in homogenizing cultures to the detriment of the unique way of life of the indigenous peoples; among the shortcomings of indigenous journalism was the failure to take into account the marketplace in which the mainstream press was working; and more indigenous women should be encouraged to enter the profession of journalism.

The report summarizes discussions that were held around three main themes: indigenous issues in the mainstream press; strengthening the indigenous media; indigenous journalists and the United Nations. The Workshop recommended, *inter alia*, that: training and educational activities be developed to enable indigenous media workers to improve their professional and technical skills in the communication media and to gain knowledge and experience of the United Nations and the specialized agencies; relevant UN agencies and bodies be requested to develop further national and regional projects to provide training and assist indigenous organizations to establish and upgrade their media; the support of OHCHR be sought to establish and develop a network of indigenous media on the Internet; within the concept of the right to an ethnic language, greater and more professional use be made of communication media and new technologies to preserve oral traditions, languages written in non-Latin scripts and various forms of indigenous cultural manifestations; OHCHR be requested to organize a second workshop of indigenous media workers, in cooperation with indigenous journalists, to further explore the issues raised in Madrid; and the Working Group on Indigenous Populations consider the theme of media information and communications at its 1999 session.

Resolutions and Decisions of the Sub-Commission

The Sub-Commission adopted by consensus three resolutions and one decision related to issues affecting indigenous peoples.

Resolution related to the study on indigenous land rights

The resolution (1998/21), *inter alia*: acknowledged that many of the human rights problems faced by indigenous peoples are linked to the historical and continuing deprivation of ancestral rights over lands, territories and resources; recognized the profound spiritual, cultural, social and economic relationship that indigenous people have to their total environment and the urgent need to respect and recognize the rights of indigenous people to their lands, territories and resources; acknowledged that, *inter alia*, lack of secure land rights, in addition to continued instability of state land tenure systems, imperil the survival of indigenous peoples; recognized that some states have enacted legal measures that uphold indigenous land rights or have established procedures for arriving at legally binding agreements on indigenous land-related issues; referred to the working paper on indigenous land rights and requested the Special Rapporteur to prepare the final working paper on the basis of the comments and information received from governments, indigenous peoples and others, and to submit it to the Working Group on Indigenous Populations and to the Sub-Commission at their 1999 sessions.

Resolution related to the International Decade

The resolution (1998/22), *inter alia*: recalled that the goal of the Decade is the strengthening of international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education and health; welcomed the observance of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People on 9 August; recommended that the celebration of this day be held on the first day of the 1999 session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations in order to ensure as great a participation of indigenous people as possible; welcomed the decision of the General Assembly, in 1997, to appoint the High Commissioner for Human Rights as Coordinator for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People; recommended that consideration be given to holding a special fund-raising meeting to encourage financial contributions to the Voluntary Fund for the Decade and the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations, as well as the appointment of qualified staff, including indigenous persons, to assist with the work of the OHCHR relating to the indigenous programme; recommended that attention continue to be given to improving the extent of the participation of indigenous peoples in planning and implementing the activities of the Decade; recommended that the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples be adopted as early as possible during the International Decade;