

an important one in Canada, and we share the view that it might well constitute a useful example of a legal arrangement providing for increased self-government by aboriginal populations without impairing the sovereign integrity of the nation-state.

However, this arrangement would not fall within the mandate of the proposed study as currently framed because it is neither a treaty nor a "convention", even though the spokesman for the non-governmental organization concerned has had occasion to label it as such in statements before this body as well as the Sub-Commission. Indeed, while Canada has many less recent arrangements with its aboriginal populations which are styled as "treaties", none of the more modern arrangements, of most immediate relevance to the Working Group's mandate, would be covered by the proposed study in its present form.

For these reasons, Mr. Chairman, my delegation believes that more groundwork needs to be done. In particular, the views of all interested parties - most notably governments and indigenous organizations - need to be systematically canvassed. An exercise which rehearses issues and grievances predating the United Nations not only risks achieving little of long-term value but, judging from the comments of a number of delegations, could undermine the existing broad support for the Sub-Commission's work in this area.

It might, on the other hand, be possible to recast the proposal with a view to ensuring that its results will contribute to the development of innovative, forward-looking approaches to relationships between indigenous populations and governments. If this can be achieved, the Sub-Commission will have taken a significant step in its quest to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous populations in all parts of the world. It is that - and no less than that - that the Sub-Commission has been charged with by the Commission on Human Rights; and the Government of Canada pledges its continued efforts to assist the Commission and the Sub-Commission to that end.