

priorities of the Sub-Commission's work in this field. We take these purposes to be the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous populations in all parts of the world. Frankly, it is difficult to see how a study as framed in the present proposal would contribute to this modern-day challenge and we see little, if any, relationship between the present proposal and the Working Group's central mandate of developing globally applicable standards. These difficulties - and the attendant controversy and confusion - might have been avoided if the proposal had received the benefit of more thorough prior consideration by governments and other parties potentially involved in such an undertaking. I offer the following comments in the hope that the obstacles to a constructive study might yet be overcome.

In the view of my delegation, there are at least three essential criteria for the effective pursuit of any study of this nature. First, there must be clarity of purpose, and this purpose should be both feasible and of direct, constructive relevance to the overall, long-term objectives of the organization. Secondly, there should be universality of scope or, more precisely, coincidence of scope with the long-term objectives: selectivity of "targets" on arbitrary grounds, be they geographical or historical, is the surest way to undermine any thematic or standard-setting exercise. Finally, any study of a specific evaluative or judgmental nature can only proceed on the basis of agreed standards.

I do not intend to dwell on each of these points, Mr. Chairman, for it is my impression that, if the first of these issues can be sorted out, that is the purposes of such a study, the rest will fall into place. Some parties have suggested that the Working Group is essentially interested in considering the procedural underpinnings and substantive scope of constitutional, legal and de facto arrangements between indigenous populations and national governments, with a view to framing draft standards in this complex and wide-ranging area. Such an objective is laudable, as it highlights an issue that is critical to the interests of indigenous populations in many countries, including Canada. For instance, one Canadian non-governmental organization has on a number of occasions mentioned in the Commission and the Sub-Commission the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, a comprehensive settlement made between the Cree of Northern Quebec and the governments of Canada and Quebec. This agreement is