

If the Working Group is to effectively contribute to meeting these challenges, Mr. Chairman, this will require a concerted and concentrated effort to fulfill the specific goals set for it by the Commission and ECOSOC. The central element of this mandate is the development of international standards in the field of aboriginal rights. Canada supports this mandate, has actively contributed to the standard-setting work achieved to date, and will be shortly submitting to the Secretariat further comments on fourteen draft articles which might contribute to an eventual declaration on the rights of indigenous populations.

In connection with this standard-setting work, Mr. Chairman, there is one fundamental point which we have emphasized in the past and which we believe warrants attention whenever the Commission considers this topic. A draft declaration on indigenous rights must be consistent with, and should as much as possible build on, the relevant international instruments which embody universally recognized rights to which all people are entitled. This is as much a matter of practical necessity as of basic principle: existing texts are the product of long, arduous negotiations, from the Commission through to the General Assembly; only by adhering to established principles and texts where relevant will the Working Group be able to dedicate the earliest possible attention to the development of new principles and fresh departures when warranted by the special needs and circumstances of indigenous populations.

Mr. Chairman, I will now turn briefly to the specific draft resolutions concerning indigenous issues which the Sub-Commission has put before this body. It follows naturally from what I have already said that Canada would support draft resolution VIII concerning the preparation of draft principles by the Chairman of the Working Group. We have noted, and fully understand, the comments and concerns of other delegations about the remaining three proposals, but I would propose to restrict my present remarks to draft resolution IX regarding a proposed study on indigenous treaties. I do so, Mr. Chairman, because I am aware that Canada's views on this matter have been the object of considerable discussion at this session, and of some apparent misconception.

Let me emphasize at the outset, Mr. Chairman, that the Canadian Government does not object to the idea of a study that would advance the agreed purposes and