

this session of the Working Group make solid progress and build upon the work done last year. We are pleased that you have been able to reflect the interests of all participants in the Working Group by rescheduling time for general statements.

We know that you will continue to maintain an open and transparent process which will allow for the crucial and effective contribution of the many organizations of indigenous people present. Their input will be indispensable to developing a strong and durable Declaration. In that regard, we also support your efforts and those of the Centre to provide facilities and services in order to assist the participation of those organizations. We are confident that, with patience and understanding for the interests of all participants, we can work together to achieve our common goal.

On 11 October, the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, met with Canadian Aboriginal leaders and stated that our delegation would play an active and constructive role in this Working Group. He also made a commitment to them to establish an ongoing intersessional process of dialogue and consultation on the Draft Declaration in Canada. As the Canadian delegation stated last year, we will wish once again to discuss the outcome of this session of the Working Group, as well as the various provisions of the draft Declaration, with interested stakeholders in Canada, including Canadian indigenous groups, and provinces and territories.

Mr. Chairperson,

My delegation is here to work hard, to show demonstrable progress and to build momentum towards next year. We look forward to hearing from all delegations and indigenous representatives present for, if we are to make progress, it is imperative that the full range of positions be voiced. The free expression of all points of view is an essential part of our deliberations. My delegation is confident that your final report on this session again will reflect the full range of views expressed and will be a positive, forward looking guide to next year.

All of us here, states and organizations of indigenous people alike, must take up the challenge, and bear the responsibility for taking this Working Group significantly closer to our goal. Thank you.