

Mr. Chairperson

My delegation has listened carefully to the interventions made by the representatives of indigenous groups and wishes to reiterate Canada's commitment to achieving the goal of a Declaration that reflects the unique place of indigenous people in the world; that is universal in application; that promotes reconciliation and the protection of indigenous rights; that works effectively against discrimination; and that provides clear and practical guidance for the development of effective and harmonious relationships between indigenous people and states - in short, a declaration that addresses a number of the very issues that have been raised this morning. The world would indeed be a richer one if there were an effective declaration. We would not wish there to be any doubt about Canada's fundamental position. That is why we are here. And we do not regard the last two days as time wasted. It is time invested. We are dealing with complex issues; and these do take time.

Like our Australian colleagues, we believe that the Working Group session last year was a success and a significant landmark. Under your leadership, the groundwork was laid and conditions set for us to move forward and make measured, tangible progress toward our goal. In particular, it was clearly established that the basis for our work would be the "Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" which was produced by the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. This recognized the dedicated effort and commitment of indigenous groups as well as the members of the WGIP and, in particular, the chairperson Madame Erica Daes.

Most importantly, organizations of indigenous people from around the world were accredited to this Working Group with some receiving financial assistance to attend. Once here, these groups used the opportunity to participate fully and effectively and made valuable contributions to the deliberations of the Working Group.

Last year, we completed an overview of the draft declaration which demonstrated broad support for the development of this important human rights instrument and the need for careful attention to its provisions. Your report, Mr. Chairperson, comprehensively outlined the issues; clearly reflected the expressed views of states and indigenous groups; and pointed out where consensus was emerging and where further deliberation is needed. Last year the Canadian delegation to the Working Group expressed preliminary views on a number of fundamental issues raised by the draft Declaration.

Mr. Chairperson,

My delegation warmly welcomes your stated intention to have