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# news release

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For release

U.N. STUDY ON TREATIES, AGREEMENTS AND OTHER  
CONSTRUCTIVE ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN STATES  
AND INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS:  
VISIT OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR

Mr. Miguel Alfonso Martinez, a Special Rapporteur appointed pursuant to a resolution of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, is in Canada to conduct a study "on treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements between States and indigenous populations". Mr. Alfonso will be examining indigenous agreements in many parts of the world.

The resolution establishing the study was one of 85 resolutions on a wide range of issues adopted at the last session of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva in March 1989. Canada spoke at the U.N. in favor of the study and joined the consensus adoption of the resolution. Canada supported a broadening of the terms of reference of the study to ensure that it would include a greater number of the world's indigenous populations. In its original form, the study would only have covered indigenous populations with treaties; this would have excluded most indigenous populations (including some in Canada) which have no such agreements.

The study is not an investigation into compliance with Canadian treaties. Rather it is an international study to examine the potential utility of indigenous treaties and other agreements for indigenous populations throughout the world and, in particular, for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of those populations. According to the terms of reference contained in the resolution authorizing the Special Rapporteur to produce an outline of the study, the latter is meant to assist in the development "of innovative, forward-looking approaches to relationships between indigenous populations and Governments".

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In a project outline that he produced in 1988, Mr. Alfonso expressed his intention to evaluate "the extent to which the conclusion of new treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements ... may contribute effectively to the development of more solid, lasting and equitable bases for the relationship ... between indigenous populations and States".

Canada has had considerable experience with a wide variety of treaties, agreements and other arrangements with its indigenous peoples and believes this experience may provide useful guidance for other societies. The Canadian Government has offered the Special Rapporteur every cooperation. We have already provided him with material through the Canadian Embassy in Havana.

The Government of Canada offers its best wishes for the success of the study and expresses its hope that other states will also cooperate with the Special Rapporteur and that no region of the world with significant indigenous populations will be ignored.