



BREAKING NEWS

Victory at Human Rights Council

In voting on the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, thirty countries voted in favour, two voted against, twelve abstained and three were absent [Australia was not part of the vote]. Those who voted for the adoption were nine Asian countries, four African countries, four Eastern European and other states, seven from Latin America and the Caribbean. Having been adopted by the Human Rights Council, the Resolution will now go to the United Nations General Assembly which will decide on its adoption. The draft resolution to be voted on by the General Assembly reads:

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples says indigenous peoples have the right to full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law. Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity. Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their rights to participate fully, if they so chose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the state.

Canada and the Russian Federation voted against the resolution in the Human Rights Council. Paul Meyer (Canada) acknowledged 'the important role that Canada, as well as other indigenous organizations, had played in the process of the drafting of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples'...and 'some other countries and a few indigenous representatives noted in their statements difficulties with a process where all parties had not discussed proposed language on several key issues'...' Canada had a long and proud tradition of not only supporting but also actively advocating Aboriginal and treaty rights at home and was fully committed to working internationally on indigenous issues. Regrettably, however, Canada would vote against the resolution'.

Similarly, Alexey Akzhigitov (Russian Federation) noted that '... the text did not enjoy genuine consensus, and had not been agreed on by all sides. Its adoption would set a negative precedent, and in this context Russia could not support the draft declaration in this form and in the procedure that had been used, and would vote against it. However, this did not mean that Russia was against a continuation of a discussion of the issue, and would work for international cooperation in the protection of the rights of indigenous persons'.

Adele Wildschut of the Indigenous Peoples Caucus, said 'on adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that ...the repeated demands for the distinction of the distinct status of the indigenous peoples had at last been addressed, after substantive debate with positions that had been consistent with international law...The true legacy of the declaration would be the way in which the lives of the indigenous peoples would be affected on a daily basis. It was the implementation of the declaration at the community level which would have the greatest impact.'

This information is from Victoria Tauli Corpuz, Chairperson, United Nations (UN) Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Executive Director, Tebtebba (Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education), Convenor, Asian Women's Network. Available at: www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi

[Back to contents](#)