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International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development

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Adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Joint Statement by International Non-Governmental Organizations.

International human rights organizations welcomed today's decision by the United Nations General Assembly to adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Declaration provides guidance on basic measures needed to ensure the dignity, survival and well-being of some of the world's most impoverished and marginalized peoples.

The Declaration recognizes the rights of Indigenous peoples to the lands, territories and natural resources that are critical to their ways of life. The Declaration affirms that Indigenous peoples, like all peoples, have the right to self-determination.

Adoption of the Declaration sends a clear message to the international community that the rights of Indigenous peoples are not separate from or less than the rights of others, but are an integral and indispensable part of a human rights system dedicated to the rights of all.

The Declaration was adopted by a vote of 143 to four with 11 abstentions. The vote was called by Australia, New Zealand and the US. Only Canada joined these three states in voting against the Declaration.

The Declaration has been under development for more than two decades within the UN system. The Declaration was adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 29 June 2006, and human rights organizations joined with Indigenous peoples in calling for its immediate adoption by the UN General Assembly. However, final adoption was delayed and further amendments were introduced to accommodate the concerns of some states.

We hope that all States will work in good faith to implement in their domestic law and practice this vitally important and long overdue human rights instrument.

These organizations call on all States to seize the historic opportunity presented by adoption of the Declaration to enter into a new relationship with Indigenous peoples based on a principled commitment to the protection of human rights.

Amnesty International

Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers).

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH)

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)

Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples (NCIV)

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