



# INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

## Statement before the Third Committee of the General Assembly

### Agenda item 66 (a, b): Indigenous peoples

Introduced by: Ms. Karin Riedl

New York, 17 October 2011

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Chairperson,

I am pleased to provide a brief update on the IPU's work to promote the rights of indigenous peoples, and notably the representation and participation of indigenous peoples in politics. I refer also to the statements made by the IPU to this committee in previous years. The IPU believes that a democratic parliament should reflect the social diversity of the population in terms of gender, language, religion, ethnicity, or other politically significant characteristics. We have affirmed that the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples is an important precondition for their effective participation in politics. We have also outlined some policy options for the consideration of parliaments and policy-makers which could help to promote the rights of indigenous peoples.

I would like to share the political outcome of the international conference on *Parliaments, minorities and indigenous peoples* that took place in Chiapas, Mexico, in November 2010. The participants, parliamentarians from more than 35 countries, adopted the Chiapas Declaration at the end of the conference, in which they state:

*We are calling for genuine change. We cannot accept that minorities and indigenous peoples are the most vulnerable members of our societies and that they remain excluded from decision-making that affects their lives and the future of our countries.*

The Declaration calls on parliaments to adopt a Plan of Action to make the right to equal participation and non-discrimination a reality for minorities and indigenous peoples. It recommends that parliamentary Plans of Action contain a number of important provisions relating to the rights of indigenous peoples:

- That the principle of free, prior and informed consent is observed in every step leading to the adoption of legislative and administrative measures affecting indigenous peoples;
- That all submissions to parliament of draft legislation and the national budget be required to include an assessment of their impact on indigenous peoples;
- That sufficient resources be allocated to establishing dialogue between indigenous peoples and public institutions;
- That parliaments hold governments to account for their international commitments, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; more particularly, that

they urge ratification of ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The IPU is convinced that parliamentary action along these lines is a necessary condition for the fulfilment of the rights of indigenous peoples. To this end, a handbook for parliamentarians on the rights of indigenous peoples is currently being prepared, in partnership with the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the United Nations Development Programme. This handbook is intended to provide practical ideas for implementation of the UN Declaration at the national and local levels, and is due to be launched in the first half of 2012.

I hope in the coming years to be able to report on the impact of these initiatives, and on many other forms of parliamentary action to promote the rights of indigenous peoples.

Thank you.