

Explanation by Mr. Randhir Jaiswal, First Secretary, of Position of India on the report of the 9th session of the Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues to the ECOSOC, during the General Segment on 22 July 2010

Thank you Mr. President,

I would like to make an explanation of position on behalf of India regarding the report of the 9th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to the ECOSOC.

Mr. President,

Government of India is a strong supporter of the promotion and protection of the rights of the indigenous peoples. As a result, we had supported the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples in 2007. At the time of its adoption we had expressed clearly our understanding that the declaration pertains to the issue of rights to peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present State boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions. This is the exact definition used in ILO Convention No. 169 of 1989. Consistent with this definition, we regard the entire population of India at the time of our Independence, and their successors, to be indigenous.

Mr. President,

This year, in two of the reports submitted to the Permanent Forum, namely E/C.19/2010/3/Add.1 and E/C.19/2010/8 the term 'tribals' has been interchangeably used with 'indigenous' in the Indian context, especially in paragraphs 13 and 23, and

paragraphs 41 and 62 respectively. In this regard, we would like to reiterate that we have a clear understanding on the distinction between the two terminologies and have stated the same in various international fora including, at the UN General Assembly. Therefore, the UN System, including its various Specialised Agencies and Funds and Programmes should ensure that it use the correct terminologies in all its public documents and reports.

Mr. President,

Increasingly it has been observed in the recent Forum meetings that various 'so called' indigenous groups are using this opportunity to make statements and raising issues related to various other minority groups. This has resulted in diverting the attention of the Forum from its core concerns of indigenous issues.

In addition, there is also an urgent need for a transparent process of scrutiny of the NGOs or indigenous groups, who claim to be representing indigenous issues, prior to giving them accreditation for the Forum meeting, in accordance to ECOSOC resolution 1996/31.

We would, therefore, urge the Members of the Forum to be cognizant of the mandate of the Forum and steer the discussions in the Forum to focus on indigenous issues.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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