



## OHCHR FACT SHEET

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### **The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

On 13 September 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration is a landmark for the United Nations, giving expression to the collective rights of peoples who have suffered long centuries of exploitation, racism and despoliation of their lands.

The Declaration represents the culmination of 25 years of discussion and negotiation under the auspices of the UN, with hundreds of indigenous representatives – women, elders, youth, chiefs, and spiritual leaders – playing a full role.

It is a Declaration of affirmation since States are now committed, through its adoption, to reconciliation and the building of just and equitable societies in which indigenous peoples are full partners. It is a Declaration that acknowledges the existence, values and aspirations of the multitude of diverse cultures that people the Member States of the United Nations. It states that indigenous peoples have the same rights as others and should be treated equally. It outlaws all forms of discrimination based on their indigenous origin and identity and sets out the right of indigenous peoples to exist as distinct peoples and to choose the community they belong to.

The Declaration also recognizes the right for indigenous peoples to be consulted, through their own representative institutions, prior to the approval of any project affecting the lands on which they live and prior to the adoption or implementation of any legislative or administrative measure that may affect them. It also safeguards their right to determine their political status and to pursue their own priorities in economic, social and cultural development. The full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in developing health, housing, media and educational systems is covered by the Declaration. It also explicitly encourages harmonious and cooperative relations between states and indigenous peoples.

The Declaration will guide governments, policy-makers and development practitioners in developing cooperation with the indigenous peoples living within their states, and to promote and protect their human rights, including their right to a distinct identity as peoples. It provides the foundation – along with other human rights standards – for the development of policies and laws to protect the collective human rights of indigenous peoples. It also clarifies how states and the international community can engage with indigenous peoples using the Declaration as a framework for action.

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