

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Amnesty International urges all states to support the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

There should be no further delays in the final adoption of the vitally important and long overdue United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Amnesty International is supporting Indigenous organisations worldwide in urging all states to support the adoption of the Declaration as a critical step toward ending the pervasive human rights violations faced by Indigenous peoples.

The Declaration was adopted by the newly-formed UN Human Rights Council on 29 June 2006. It is expected to come before the UN General Assembly for final adoption within a matter of weeks.

The Declaration calls on states to work closely with Indigenous peoples in ensuring protection of rights pertaining to self-determination, education, cultural identity, and the use of lands, territories and resources essential to Indigenous peoples' livelihoods and ways of living.

Amnesty International welcomes the decision of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights which recently adopted an advisory opinion confirming that the Declaration "is in conformity with the African Commission's jurisprudence on the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous populations." This decision is particularly important because uncertainty about the Declaration among African states was a central reason driving the decision to defer final adoption until the end of the current session.

Amnesty International urges all African states to heed the expert opinion of the African Commission and confirm their intention to support this vital instrument for overcoming discrimination.

A group of seven states – Australia, Canada, Colombia, Guyana, New Zealand, the Russian Federation and Suriname – has publicly called for further negotiations to redraft the central provisions of the Declaration.

Not only would such a process lead to unacceptable delays in the adoption of the Declaration, it would run the risk of the Declaration never being adopted at all or of its provisions being so weakened and undermined that Indigenous peoples would be denied the protection they need and to which they are entitled.

The Declaration has been under development for more than two decades within the United Nations. Throughout that period, there has been growing recognition among international human rights bodies that urgent measures are needed to address centuries of dispossession, impoverishment and marginalisation faced by Indigenous peoples around the world.