SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO
HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che l'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite, l'Arcivescovo S.E. Mons. Celestino Migliore, ha pronunciato ieri a New York, davanti alla 6a Sessione del Forum Permanente sui problemi degli indigeni dell'ECOSOC sul tema speciale: "*Territori, terre e risorse naturali*":

● INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. CELESTINO MIGLIORE

Madam Chair,

First of all, my delegation would like to congratulate you and all the officers elected this year and to wish you well in the important task of maintaining the forward momentum in favour of indigenous peoples already achieved by this Permanent Forum since the start of this century.

From the time the Forum met last year, much has happened regarding steps to improve the exercise of the rights of indigenous peoples at the national and international levels, particularly in light of the Forum's special theme this year of *Territories, lands and natural resources*.

The postponement of the adoption of the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (DRIP) marked a disappointing moment.

After 24 years' discussion in a working group of the Commission on Human Rights, the draft Declaration was taken up at the first session of the Human Rights Council and, after a recorded vote, was duly sent to the General Assembly for adoption as part of the first Report of the Human Rights Council.

My delegation would like to express its regret that the adoption of the draft Declaration was postponed. In this regard, we would like to draw attention to the benefits which the existence of such a human rights instrument would entail especially for the very poorest living in rural areas, often of indigenous origin and often marginalized by the modern world, and those who could be empowered to contribute much more to the political and economic life where they live.

Various objections have been raised against the draft Declaration as it currently stands. Some say that the DRIP contradicts national constitutions and that self-determination only concerns those who used to live under colonial rule. Others suggest that the DRIP is unclear on what constitutes "indigenous people", while still claiming to support the Declaration, in spite of substantive concerns. While respecting the motivations behind each position, the Holy See wishes to reiterate the particular importance it attaches to the Instrument under consideration and encourages UN member States to show flexibility and social farsightedness with a view to reaching an agreement during the present session of the General Assembly. My delegation believes that such a political gesture would not only profit the poorest and most excluded citizens in both rich and poor countries of the world, but would also enhance peace among peoples and foster the just and equitable enjoyment of human rights by all.

To judge by events in the Third Committee last autumn, there appear to exist genuine concerns that the DRIP could lead to demands that might break the fragile links forged at great cost among disparate tribal groups born as states within the last fifty or so years. Some also seem to fear that the Declaration may become a threat to sovereignty or to state revenues from natural resources. Such concerns however should not marginalize the best interest of the poorest peoples in such resource-rich territories; nor should states be oblivious to the economic progress for all that could be achieved by a greater regard for the particular genius of indigenous peoples and what they may be willing to contribute when their good will, not just their free, prior and informed consent, is sought and received.

The rush to exploit resources which we are witnessing in many places not only puts the natural habitat under stress; there is sometimes little evidence of any good in political, social or economic terms, in favour of the peoples where such resources are found. Given the universal destination of the world's goods, it is hardly surprising when peoples react to the departure of resources from their lands, while they see little coming back to those lands in return.

Madam Chair, this is why the Holy See believes that we should all work towards a consensus adoption of the Declaration; but even the absence of such a consensus should not be a pretext for delaying the vindication of the legitimate concerns of indigenous peoples. States have legitimate concerns regarding sovereignty, citizenship, equality and the sane and equitable exploitation of natural resources, but these questions should not allow progress on indigenous peoples' equally legitimate rights and concerns to be postponed *sine die*.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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