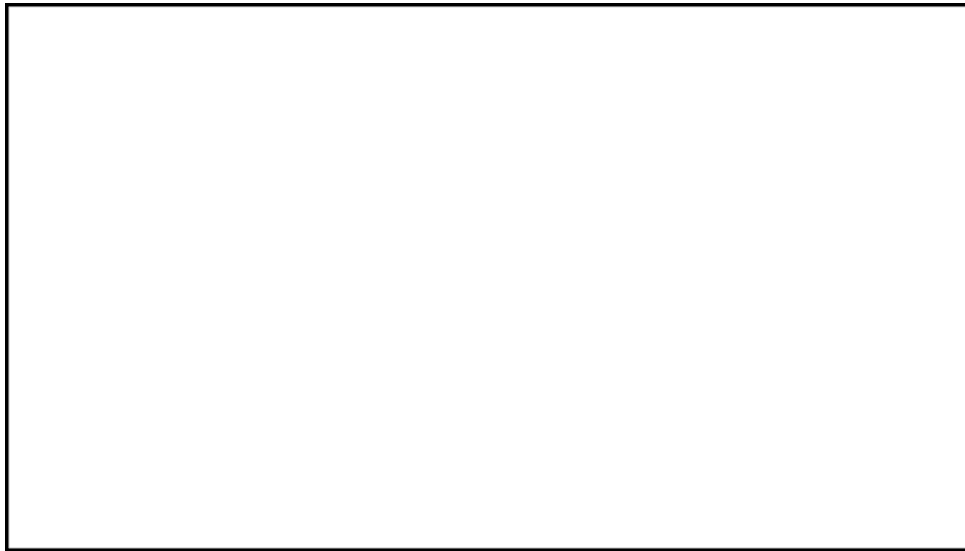


Indian Law Resource Center

Indigenous Peoples' Rights

<https://indianlaw.org/story/center-urges-implementation-american-declaration-first-annual-oas-inter-american-forum>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing



[Español](#)

Madam/Mister Chair, Ambassadors, Distinguished Guests of the Organization of American States, Indigenous Leaders and Representatives of Indigenous Governments:

My name is Armstrong Wiggins. I am a Miskito Indian from the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, and today I speak in my capacity as the Director of the Washington, DC Office of the Indian Law Resource Center.

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak on the Implementation of the Plan of Action on the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples during this first OAS Inter-American Week for Indigenous Peoples. I am and will forever be grateful to witness the evolving engagement of the OAS, member states, and indigenous leaders from the Americas working together in good faith towards putting the American Declaration into action.

The Indian Law Resource Center has 40 years of experience in the area of indigenous peoples rights. The Center is a non-profit law and advocacy organization founded and directed by American Indians. The Center provides legal assistance without charge to Indian Nations working to protect their self-determination, lands, resources, human rights, environment, and cultural heritage. A hallmark of our work has been assisting indigenous peoples to establish international human rights standards, such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the OAS American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Center and hundreds of indigenous leaders spent 26 years negotiating with the OAS for a strong American Declaration, despite severe opposition by some states. The American Declaration, adopted on June 15, 2016, is a powerful and far-reaching statement of the rights of indigenous peoples, including their collective rights, such as the right of self-determination and their rights to their lands and resources, the rights of women and children, and the right to be free from discrimination and other abuses. The American Declaration also includes rights, such as the rights of indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation, that go beyond the UN Declaration. Last year, in conjunction with member states, we encouraged the adoption of a Plan of Action to implement the Declaration to put these rights into effect at the OAS and to foster implementation among all member states. The Plan of action is a major step forward. However, much remains to be done, and we must start now.

Madam/Mister Chair:

We should start by addressing three crucial ideas or proposals for the implementation of the Plan of Action in a manner that will be effective and sustainable over time. These ideas are: (1) to hold a two-day consultation with indigenous peoples dedicated to the implementation of the Plan of Action; (2) the creation of a new mechanism devoted to monitoring the implementation of the Declaration; and (3) establishing a new status for the permanent and more appropriate participation of indigenous governments in OAS activities.

First, we urge this organization and its member states to hold a two-day consultation with indigenous peoples on the implementation of the Plan of Action. While we welcome today's general discussion on this Plan of Action, we all agree that this is just the beginning. It is not enough. A more focused discussion on this topic should take place either here in Washington, DC or in the territory of a member state, in an accessible location. A two-day consultation with indigenous peoples will help, for example, to identify which implementation

measures should be considered by this organization and its member states. More importantly, such a consultation will be critical to gain much-needed consensus and collaboration between indigenous peoples and members states in carrying out the implementation of the Plan of Action. The United Nations has, many times, held consultations with indigenous peoples on various human rights issues. It is a very helpful practice.

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