



**SOCHUM**

# STUDY GUIDE

—

**THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**ROTMUN**  
MMXVIII



ROTMUN2018.COM



ROTMUNKHI



## Humza Nadeem Jami

### Secretary General

Humza Nadeem Jami will be serving as the Secretary General for the Rotaract Model United Nations Conference 2018. Jami, as he likes to be known, is a graduate of the Lahore University of Management Sciences, where he was a senior member of the LUMUN Society's Secretariat and Travelling Model UN Team. Prior to this, he was a former Head Delegate at the Lyceum School's Debate Team, one of the powerhouses of the country.

As a member of the LUMUN Secretariat, Jami is famous for the most technologically innovative and immersive crisis experiences Pakistan has ever seen - having designed and chaired Harry Truman's National Security Council as part of the country's first ever Joint Crisis Cabinet (JCC) in 2016, and a Twitter integrated real time UN Security Council in 2017. As a part of the LUMUN Travelling Model UN Team, he reached the pinnacle of his career when he won a Diplomacy Award at the Harvard World Model UN Conference hosted in Panama City, Panama in March 2018 (as seen in the picture above).

Jami has been doing Model UN since January 2011, and cannot be more excited to welcome you to ROTMUN! He is an original graduate and a two time Best Delegate winner at the original Rotaract Model UN Conference that occurred between the years of 2010 and 2012, hosted by the Rotaract Public Speaking Forum.

His vision for the conference is simple: to bring the best and the absolute best of the country inside the halls of IBA City Campus for the most uniquely immersive delegate experience offered at any Model UN Conference in the country. He is inspired by the ROTMUNs of yore, where high levels of academic integrity and learning were the core of Model UN as an activity, which he finds an opportunity to revive this year. He will be flying in chairs from the best corners of the country to achieve this.

Jami feels Model UN has become an activity that has become very elitist, very exclusionary, and has lost its roots in intellectual political dialogue. All of that will return in due time at the 2018 edition of the Rotaract Model United Nations Conference under his leadership to foster Socratic dialogue using this activity.







## Uwais Parekh

### Under Secretary General

Uwais graduated from Cedar College in 2018 and is currently in the midst of figuring stuff out in his gap year. Usually found in bed with a bag of Doritos while he goes hours into the night being engrossed with Video Games

Uwais served as the Head of the Model UN wing of Cedar Union, Cedar's Public Speaking & Debating Society in his last year where he captained the Model UN Team to multiple landmarks at conferences such as LUMUN, MUNIK & HUMUN.

He has also been a long serving member of the Destiny Model United Nations Society, having served as the Vice President & the Academic Curator for their annual Conference, apart from that Uwais somehow managed to garner an Experience of more than an acceptable amount of Public Speaking & Debating Events; be they Model UNs, Parliamentary Debates or Moot Courts, at the obvious expense of his GPA

Being an Immense Believer in the change that is only plausible through discourse and engagement with Ideas. Uwais absolutely cannot wait to give it his all to ensure that aspiring policy makers have the suitable environment to participate in dialogue that helps them explore the diplomat present within themselves in the Country's best emulation of the Chambers of the United Nations







## Maheen Naveed

### Under Secretary General

Maheen is currently in her first year pursuing an MBBS degree at Ziauddin University but likes to spend her free time imagining all the possible, completely unrelated careers she can go into after she completes her MBBS. She is a graduate of the Lyceum School, where she was Head Delegate of the Debate Team and regards that time as one of her most cherished.

During her tenure as a member of the Lyceum's Debate Team, she has won awards at local and international conferences including LUMUN, ROTMUN, MUNIK and Harvard MUN; the former at which she was awarded a Best Delegate at UNSC and the latter at which she was awarded Honourable Mention twice.

She is looking forward to helping create a conference that is centred on the classic MUN values of energetic debate, impeccable policy making and above all, a return to the high standard of academic intellect and argumentation theory that is expected of delegates attending the hallowed halls of a ROTMUN conference.

She hopes that ROTMUN is the experience of a lifetime for it's delegates, and wishes you the best of luck in October!







## Ahmed Changazi

### Committee Director

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The Committee Director for SOCHUM writes the following:

“Dear delegates,

Hello!

I will be chairing the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee — the Third Committee of the U.N. General Assembly — at ROTMUN 2018. I am from the city of Lahore, and I have been part of the national Model UN fraternity since 2009.

I started my journey in the world of Model UN as a delegate at LUMUN 2009, where I debated in the Disarmament and International Security Committee. Since then, I have been active as a delegate, committee director, and host team member in several conferences. I have had the opportunity to serve as a senior member of the LUMUN society, and have been fortunate enough to have represented Pakistan and the LUMUN society internationally at conferences in India and Germany.

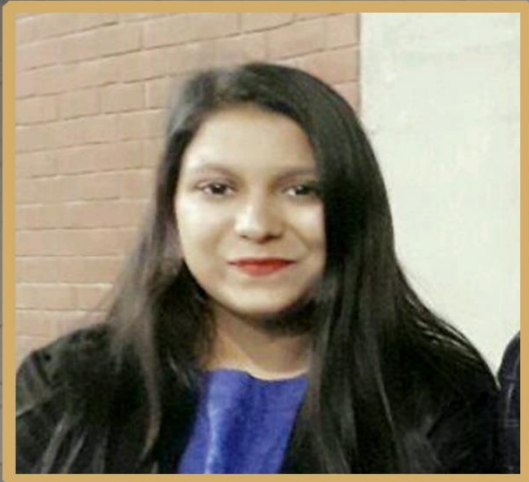
Perhaps the most undervalued and overlooked aspect of any conference is the chance to interact with new people. Winning may be important, yes, but it should not come at the expense of your own or anyone else's experience. Come prepared, push yourselves to participate and perform to the best of your abilities, but most importantly, get to know the people in your committee. If you are lucky, you will end up forming lasting friendships.

I am an Arsenal fan, a major foodie, a music enthusiast, and a travel lover. I hope to get to know cool things about all of you as well soon!

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## Mehvish Munir

### Committee Director

Mehvish graduated from Cedar College in 2018, where she played an integral part in putting the Cedar College Model UN Program on the map as outlined by her back to back wins at LUMUN for the duration of her tenure at her alma mater.

Mehvish also boasts plentiful Parliamentary Debating experience, three MUNIK Awards, multiple MPNA Chairing Experiences and has played an Active role in DMUN, having chaired it and served as the Under Secretary General.

Known as the Bollywood Diva amongst her friends, Mehvish is a diehard Bollywood fan, doing weekly rewatches of classic films such Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Dil Chahta Hai & Kal Ho Na Ho.

She's always open to giving critique to delegates everyday to ensure a better learning experience, but expects her delegates to hold themselves to an uncompromisingly high ethical standard.



## The Rights of Indigenous Peoples

### Introduction

SOCHUM is one of the main GA committees; therefore, like the other main committees of the GA, it was established in 1947 and follows the rules of the General Assembly, which are indicated in the Charter of the United Nations. The membership of the committee includes all 193 member states. In addition, non-member states and other entities recognized by the UN as permanent observers may attend and participate in meetings, but they cannot vote.

SOCHUM is a forum for UN Member States to discuss social, humanitarian, and cultural issues, especially those related to human rights. The committee and its subsidiary body, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), take the lead in drafting general resolutions on these matters. According to the SOCHUM mandate; social, humanitarian, and cultural issues include, but are not limited to; the advancement of women's rights, the protection of children, issues related to indigenous affairs, the treatment of refugees and economic migrants, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self-determination. The committee also addresses important social development questions such as issues related to youth, family, ageing, persons with disabilities, prevention of heinous crime, criminal justice, and control over the international drug epidemic. Unlike Security Council resolutions, resolutions passed in the General Assembly are not binding.

Matters relating to social, humanitarian or cultural are more difficult to solve as compared to economic, financial or security dilemmas. Culture, and social structure are often difficult and costly to change, because they are the factors which make a "community" or a "nation" unique and special. With that in mind, delegates must come up with a set of practical ideas and consider humanitarian facts while keeping in mind the ethics and cultural norms of all parties the resolution is pertaining to. Truly all-encompassing ideas must address all three facets of the committee, which are the aforementioned social, humanitarian and cultural in nature.

Every committee requires a great deal of effort, but if you are planning to simulate SOCHUM; it is advisable to make your research more detailed and intricate than you would for most committees, direct your research towards sustainable and long lasting policy, and as always ensure you have the financial resources to backup your creative ideas. Lastly, understand your government's views and policy on the national/international affairs. As you learn more, you will be able to come up with realistic ideas that respect and take into consideration the cultural, religious, and social rights, and the thousands of different lifestyles embraced by people all over the world.





## Statement of the Problem

The indigenous population in a region can be defined as the people(s) whose ancestors inhabited that area before the influence of modern state crafting and external cultural influence. In the context of this committee, as delegates you are tasked with reviewing current legislature for the protection of the rights of indigenous people and preservation of their way of life, and analyse and report on the contemporary difficulties faced by indigenous people; especially in the areas of their sovereignty, conservation of their alimentary resources and habitats, land rights, modern borders, socioeconomic position, educational opportunities, physical and psychological well-being et cetera.

An estimated 370 million indigenous peoples belong to 5,000 different cultural groups in 90 countries around the world. Indigenous cultures often retain many of their original languages, religious practices, and customs, and many indigenous groups identify as distinct from “non-native” populations in the same country or region. Despite the diversity of indigenous populations around the world, their struggles and histories since the rise of modern states and boundaries are often tied together by tales of exploitation and oppression.

Against all odds, the indignities of colonization, and the expansion of modern society, indigenous peoples have survived as communities with a strongly felt, time-honoured identity. Their claims and aspirations are diverse, but they're united in the struggle for the preservation and flourishing of a culture inextricably, and often spiritually, tied to their ancestral land. This special relationship to the land distinguishes them from other communities or groups dispossessed in terms of power or wealth. The world community has, through domestic and international laws and high profile apologies, recognized their special claims, and it has tailored a legal regime for them. Former American President Barack Obama, former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, and former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apologies to indigenous groups within their respective countries, for example, exhibit this awareness of indigenous groups' hardships and experiences in the modern world. A global policy for indigenous people fosters cultural diversity, in particular, the protection of their threatened heritage, their language, their rituals, their land. The 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is a major milestone, but much remains to be done.

Indigenous populations can be divided into two distinct subsets; those who have have significantly exposed to colonization and the expansionary policies of external cultures (such as the Maya peoples of Mexico and Central America) and uncontacted and unmarked cultures (UUCs), such as the Sentinelese and the Jarawa of the Andaman Islands. An uncontacted culture is one whose people have never had enough interaction with external groups or influences to become fully aware of the rest of the world—and whose ways of life therefore may appear anachronistic. An unmarked culture is one whose people have made enough contact with the outside world to be well aware of it but choose to retain their original ways of life without any influence of external traditions, technology, and, sometimes, interaction. In our guide we will be providing a case study on each, in order to better understand the unique problems facing





both.

## Discussion of the Problem

The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights state that all peoples have the right of self-determination by virtue of which they “freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development”. However, the history of injustice common to all indigenous peoples is no secret. They have been killed, tortured and enslaved. In many cases, they have been the victims of genocide. They have been denied the right to participate in governing processes of the current state systems. Conquest and colonization have attempted to steal their dignity and identity as indigenous peoples, as well as the fundamental right of self-determination.

Why is it important for national communities to protect the communities of birth or destiny of an individual? The Universal Declaration of Human Rights underlines key principles for the protection of a singular human being's rights, but the ability to identify with a group of a distinct cultural identity and interact with kin and kind is in itself a process of self-realization, which is a key human need and thus the responsibility of such legal instruments to safeguard.

Indigenous peoples have campaigned for social and economic rights such as food, health care, and shelter. But they have also historically campaigned for preservation of their endangered culture, their language, their lands. Speaking of the importance of land rights for indigenous peoples, the leader of the Indian Nations Union in the Amazon, Ailton Krenak has formulated:

“When the government took our land ... they wanted to give us another place ... But the State, the government, will never understand that we do not have another place to go. The only possible place for [indigenous] people to live and to re-establish our existence, to speak to our Gods, to speak to our nature, to weave our lives, is where our God created us ... We are not idiots to believe that there is possibility of life for us outside of where the origin of our life is. Respect our place of living, do not degrade our living conditions, respect this life ... [T]he only thing we have is the right to cry for our dignity and the need to live in our land.”

The international community has seen positive reinforcement in safeguarding the right of sovereignty of indigenous peoples; including the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights to preserve their distinct identity and dignity and to govern their own affairs – be they ‘tribal sovereigns’ in the United States, the Sami in Lapland, the *resguardos* in Colombia, or Canada's Nunavut. This move towards recognition of indigenous self-government was accompanied by an affirmation of native communities' title to the territories they traditionally used or occupied.

Education - as a key institution of the (colonising) nation-state - has played a central



part historically in the subjugation of indigenous languages and cultures, and the related assimilation of indigenous peoples into the dominant or 'common' language and culture of the nation-state. In the process, indigenous languages and cultures were specifically proscribed, demeaned, and diminished by the state via its own, often elitist education system. Consequently, indigenous languages and cultures came to be seen as primal and unnecessary in the modern world - a vestige of 'primitive' cultures best left in the past. In contrast, the languages and cultures of dominant ethnic groups were viewed as the epitome of modernity and progress.

There is often overlap between indigenous lands and high-biodiversity areas, or other areas under state protection, called 'protected areas.' A 2010 study in South America, for example, determined that 214 (27 percent) of the 801 national protected areas on the continent overlap to some degree with indigenous territories; in Central America, the proportion is as high as 90 percent. In some instances, as was the case with the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, the lands of indigenous peoples and by default their sovereignty, is breached by state-funded projects such as oil drilling or dam construction.

The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), a US underground pipeline project first proposed in 2014, is intended to transport some 470,000 barrels of crude oil a day from North Dakota to a terminal in Illinois, where it can be shipped to refineries, and provides a more cost-effective, efficient means of transporting crude. The project attracted controversy when it was announced that the original route of the pipeline, which would have passed farther north, would be rerouted to cross half a mile north of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation because of the close proximity of the state capital's drinking-water wells to the original route. This sparked a gathering of over 200 Native American tribes, the largest gathering of indigenous peoples in the US in perhaps centuries, to protest for the rerouting or reconsideration of the pipeline. The members of the Standing Rock Sioux had valid claims; first, that since the pipeline crossed so close to their reservation, a leak or spill could directly contaminate the tribe's main source of drinking water, and second, that construction works for the pipeline would damage recently discovered sacred sites and burial places. Although this land is not a part of the current reservation, the tribe argues that the government took this land from them illegally in an 1868 treaty. Ultimately, the protests are centered on the abuse of tribal sovereignty, due to the lack of consultation by the US government with the tribe on these issues, which they were required to do under federal law. On July 27, the Standing Rock Sioux and the nonprofit Earthjustice sued the Army Corps of Engineers in federal court, arguing that the agency had wrongly approved the pipeline without adequate consultation. The issue has now become a nationally contentious one, as reports surface of law enforcement authorities using extreme measures to disperse protestors, prompting the United Nations to call for suspending pipeline construction in North Dakota in light of the allegations of rights abuses of protestors.

Poverty is another major issue facing indigenous peoples across the world. Statistics about the current state of poverty among indigenous populations make clear the seriousness of the problem the international community is facing today. \_\_\_\_\_  
Rates of poverty among indigenous peoples are significantly higher than those among





non-minority groups. When we restrict our focus to the world's poor population, the relative size of the indigenous population dramatically increases; it is estimated that between ten and fifteen percent of the world's poor are members of indigenous minorities. Some populations are impoverished because they live in remote areas without access to infrastructure and basic services; others, because governments and private investors have taken their local lands for development projects. Frameworks to improve the economic situation of a specific indigenous population should be tailor made to the cause(s) of their impoverishment.

## **Case Study: The Sentinelese (UUC)**

### *Introduction*

The Sentinelese are widely considered the most isolated group of human beings on the planet. Their current numbers are uncertain, but most estimates range between 50 and 200 people. They inhabit North Sentinel Island, a small forested island in the Indian territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and are estimated to have continuously inhabited the isle for about 60,000 years. As the only inhabitants on North Sentinel and given their lack of long-range seafaring capabilities, the Sentinelese have likely not ventured far off their island since arriving, and they speak a language quite different from those of other Andamanese groups.

### *History of Interaction with the Outside World*

First contact with the outside world came in 1879, when the British discovered the island and encountered an elderly couple and four children. They brought the six individuals back to the territory's capital of Port Blair "in the interest of science," but upon the death of the couple, they returned the children along with gifts to North Sentinel.

Nearly a century afterward, starting in 1967, Indian expeditions attempted to make contact with the Sentinelese. In the 1990s, occasional visits yielded closer contact with the tribe, with unarmed Sentinelese sometimes even meeting boats out in the water to collect gifts of coconuts. However, the Sentinelese rejected any interaction beyond this level of contact, often warning expeditions to depart the island with warning shots of arrows without arrowheads. In 1996, the Indian government decided to cease its policy of making contact with a group that did not desire their presence and that could be harmed by the introduction of external diseases. After confirming that the Sentinelese survived the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, the Indian government officially suspended all efforts to contact the Sentinelese and declared the immediate vicinity of North Sentinel off-limits to all. In 2006, two fishermen illegally poaching near North Sentinel ventured too close to the island and were killed by the Sentinelese, who buried their bodies on-shore.

### *Current Threats to Physical and Medical Well-being*



## ***Current Threats to Cultural, Religious, and Environmental Preservation***

Not likely, considering the extent of their isolation. However, natural disasters such as tsunamis or earthquakes and reductions in the amount of available food could jeopardize the Sentinelese's environmental and alimentary status.

## ***Past and Current Counter-Threat Efforts***

Since 1996, the Indian government has followed a policy of limiting contact with the Sentinelese to occasional monitoring via helicopter. Leading Indian anthropologist T. N. Pandit recognized that although the Sentinelese couldn't be left alone forever, it would be difficult to formulate a way to make contact without endangerment or exploitation.

## **Case Study: The Yazidis**

### ***Introduction***

The Yazidi peoples are members of a Kurdish religious minority and are settled primarily in northern Iraq, northern Syria, southeastern Turkey, the Caucasus region and parts of Iran. They have their own religion, *Yazidism*, which combines elements of ancient Iranian religions as well as elements of Judaism, Nestorian Christianity, and Islam. Their numbers are scattered and rough estimates put them at between 200,000 and 1,000,000 people strong. Yazidi society is steeped in religious purity and is governed by a chief sheikh, who acts as the supreme religious head, and an emir (prince) as the secular head.

### ***The Yazidi in Iraq***

The Yazidi in Iraq have faced persecution at the hands of both ISIS militants and the Iraqi government. In October of 2017, Iraqi forces pushed the Kurds out of the Yazidi's mountainous heartland of Sinjar in northern Iraq and now the land they have lived on for centuries is caught up in a tug of war between Baghdad and Iraq's Kurds, who had controlled it since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003. Sinjar is politically important because it's in the disputed territories; ethnically mixed areas across northern Iraq, along the subject of a constitutional dispute between Baghdad and the Kurds, who both claim them. Sinjar fell under the Kurds' control, despite lying outside Iraqi Kurdistan's recognized borders.

In 2014, more than 3,000 were killed by Islamic State militants in a campaign described by the United Nations as genocidal. Although the efforts of the Iraqi government and the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government) were instrumental in eliminating the ISIS strongholds in the region, most Yazidis are skeptical that they will face better treatment at the hands of the Iraqi government, due to its sectarian nature and discriminatory policies towards minorities. On the other hands, the Kurds have a history of renouncing the Yazidi as a Kurdish religious minority, calling them 'devil-worshippers.'





The Yazidi's hence find themselves in the unique position of an ambiguous faction of Iraqi Kurdistan, which complicates how it can rehabilitate itself into the evolving Iraqi political landscape. Additionally, the refugee problem that the Yazidis face in both Kurdish and Iraqi territory is severe since food and money are in short supply as aid organizations stopped delivery after Iraq's advance in Sinjar.

## Past UN action

The 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the most comprehensive answer yet to the demands of indigenous peoples. UN Declarations are generally not legally binding; however, they represent the dynamic development of international legal norms and reflect the commitment of states to move in certain directions, abiding by certain principles. Some of the key articles of UNDRIP in relation to safeguarding the rights of indigenous peoples include; the novel prohibition of ethnocide against indigenous peoples (Article 8(1) – going beyond the prohibition of genocide against them, as enunciated in Article 7(2)), the prohibition of their forced removal and relocation (Article 10), their right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs, including the right to maintain, protect, and develop past, present, and future manifestations of such cultures (Article 11), including the right to manifest, practise, develop, and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies, as well as the restitution and repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains (Article 12). Article 13 guarantees indigenous peoples the right to 'revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies', etc. and obligates states to 'take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected'. An indigenous people's language is central to its culture – an ever more important issue in view of the accelerating threat that those languages will vanish and the need for this alarming downward spiral to be brought to a halt.

Additionally, delegates should look into the following UN instruments and previous actions:

- The Working Group on the Rights of Indigenous Populations, established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 1982/34 of May 1982
- International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169, which ensures indigenous peoples' control over their legal status, internal structures, and environment, and guarantees indigenous peoples' rights to ownership and possession of the total environment they occupy or use.
- The appointment and contributions of a Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples by the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2001
- With regard to indigenous peoples, the GA proclaimed in resolution 48/163 in 1993 that the decade from 1995 to 2004 would be the First International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples.<sup>6</sup> The UN aimed to address issues faced by indigenous communities through multinational efforts, and it renewed this effort in 2004 by declaring 2005 to 2014 to be the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples through resolution 59/174



## Proposed Solutions

Delegates must analyse the effectiveness of domestic law and how it now mandates a practice which would have been unthinkable only a few years ago: the demarcation and registration of First Nations' (the predominant indigenous groups of Canada) title to the lands of their ancestors. Indigenous people achieved this dramatic victory through several means: a peace treaty in Guatemala, constitutional and statutory changes in countries such as Brazil, and modifications of the common law in Australia and other states. The process of recognition of these rights in these countries should be analysed and discussed.

The first step in solving the issue of poverty among indigenous peoples is the creation of a system for gathering more information on the situations that indigenous peoples face and for understanding the specific circumstances of each group. First, instead of broad statistics for development indices across the entire population, it is necessary for countries to collect disaggregated data for indigenous groups. Collecting information specific to indigenous people would also encourage improved data collection techniques in general. Having better data on indigenous populations would raise awareness among the international community on the issues facing these groups and would provide an impetus for the implementation of policies that are specifically targeted toward them.

In order to stop the oppression of, and discrimination against indigenous people, there are two approaches. At the grassroots level, in order to conserve the integrity of the languages and cultures of indigenous people, there must be community-based education systems implemented in schools, which would allow for the direct participation of the indigenous community in setting policy and direction, thus preventing a one-sided narrative of the 'dominant' culture and language. At a larger scale, efforts must be made to allow indigenous populations their sovereignty within domestic law, representation of these communities must be boosted on a national level, rehabilitation efforts for refugees of ethnic genocide must be made, binding legislation for the protections of these communities must be implemented at a domestic level, and lasting frameworks for greater awareness of, and appreciation for the cultural diversity that indigenous populations bring to the shared human experience must be discussed and put into action.

## Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

- How effective is 'soft law' (declarations and non-legally binding GA resolutions) in regulating an international standards of practice and ensuring accountability for signatories? Is there a need for a more legally binding instrument at the GA level? Will such a measure have majority support?
- What types of threats to indigenous populations should the resolution address? Are there any kinds of threats that it prioritizes or makes special effort to resolve?
- How can the international community protect indigenous land rights in the face of significant resource extraction and infrastructural development projects?





- What measures can governments take to ensure indigenous participation in the development discussion?
- How can we guarantee access for indigenous peoples to employment, housing, and other social services without a fear of discrimination?
- Should the first MDG, and possibly the entire MDG program, be altered to reflect the needs of indigenous peoples? If so, how?

## Bloc Positions

In 2007, four nations voted against the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. These countries all have indigenous populations that have been almost completely eliminated by European settlers over the past four centuries, and the governments of these countries have confined the indigenous groups that remain to either territories that are a fraction of the land that they traditionally controlled or territories in completely new areas.

Though they have since announced their support for the initiative, these four countries originally opposed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for a number of reasons. One concern was that it would give tribal law precedence over national law. Another was that it put indigenous peoples at an unfair advantage against the non-indigenous population and essentially granted indigenous peoples the right to full self-determination. Finally, the provision in the declaration that gave indigenous peoples the right to all of their traditionally-held lands would mean that the entire territory of these four countries would have to be returned to indigenous control at the expense of modern, legal ownership.

The nations that have been most supportive of indigenous rights on the international level are those from Europe and Latin America. The remaining countries, most of which are in Africa and Asia, have mixed policies with regard to indigenous development. These countries are generally still developing and thus are concerned more with overall economic growth than assisting a small minority of the population. Often, these governments do not have the resources to create special programs for indigenous peoples and will need some assistance to implement the plans that the committee drafts.



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