

# Indigenous Peoples Permanent Delegation to the United Nations

- with offices in Geneva and New York

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## I. Justification

The Indigenous Peoples of the world have grown in importance in the United Nations system over the last twenty years. During this time, the UN has created the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, a Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples and their Human Rights, the Working Group on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, an agenda item called Indigenous Issues of the Commission on Human Rights. Furthermore, the International Labour Organisation had passed ILO Convention 169 and, more recently, other UN- initiatives in the fields of Environment, Intellectual Property, Development and other areas have followed.

This development is no accident. Indigenous Peoples have been striving for many years to have a voice in the UN system. Even in the days of the League of Nations, Indigenous representatives came to Geneva to express their views and draw attention to their plight. Since that time, the involvement of Indigenous Peoples in the UN system has constantly grown and is becoming more complex. Indigenous representation in all of the above areas has been exceptional and the sophistication of their participation has been remarkable.

Since 1977, with the first meeting of Indigenous representatives, Geneva has been the cradle of Indigenous participation in the UN system. From that first meeting grew the movement to influence the Sub-Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities to include Indigenous Peoples as a particular situation and created the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP).

From the WGIP, with its humble beginnings of perhaps 40 Indigenous representatives to today's over 1000 registered participants, came the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Year of the World's Indigenous People, and the current Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples, the Study on Treaties between Indigenous Peoples and States, and other activities and reports. The WGIP, is still the only body in the UN that allows unrestricted participation of Indigenous Peoples.

Besides the WGIP, Indigenous Peoples must attend and participate in a number of other meetings such as the Sub-commission on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, the Commission on Human Rights, the Working Group on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Human Rights Committee, Offices of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Committee for the Convention against Torture and Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment.

However, besides the United Nations Human Rights arm, other most important bodies dealing with Indigenous issues such as the International Labour Office (ILO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), World Health Organization (WHO), UNCTAD as well as easy access to the UNESCO structures can be found in Geneva. Other items with high relevance for Indigenous Peoples such as environment and sustainable development and general UN-matters might better to be followed up from a New York base.

Unfortunately, the meager resources of Indigenous Peoples is being stretched to the limit. Thus, the presence of Indigenous representatives at the UN is very transient and ad hoc. While the delegations are there, Indigenous peoples can make their voices heard on issues concerning them and information on ongoing events be obtained. However, a follow-up and a more constant monitoring at present is not possible at all.

What is needed to help Indigenous Peoples cope with the ongoing and new initiatives in the UN, as well as D most importantly - within the frameworks of WTO, WIPO, WHO, ILO among others, is to have a more permanent presence in both Geneva and New York. These offices will be designed to complement each other in its work. Hence the proposal of the Indigenous Peoples Permanent Delegation to the United Nations.

This Delegation will staff and maintain two offices, one in Geneva and one in New York, that will coordinate, support and follow-up on Indigenous meetings, strategies, activities, communication, and monitoring. This office will act as an information center of Indigenous Peoples on United Nations activities; support Indigenous delegations in accessing the UN; and monitor UN activities that affect Indigenous Peoples. The office will also take an active role in encouraging the UN to take into consideration the needs and aspirations of the Indigenous 7

Peoples in the various programs of the UN. It will help coordinate various support networks already established and work closely with the network and archives of DoCip and other supportive NGO structures.

## **II. Indigenous Peoples Permanent Delegation to the United Nations in Geneva and New York**

### **Supervision - The Board of Directors**

The offices will be overseen by a Board of Directors with Indigenous members reflecting seven regions of the world. The seven regions will correspond to the make-up of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The Board will meet once a year during one of the major UN meetings such as the WGIP or the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Other meetings can be held by electronic means. The Board will create its terms of reference common to most boards. It may oversee, both, the Geneva and the New York office.

### **Staffing**

Ideally, there should be one Director and two Officers from different regions of the world to reflect the diversity of Indigenous Peoples.

One administrative assistant would be needed to handle the bookkeeping and the general office activities.

The staff of both offices should have close linkages with each other.

### **Office space**

The office should be large enough to accommodate the permanent staff and furnishings as well as interns from the various regions and volunteers. For the Geneva office, it should also be large enough to accommodate DoCip, its staff, offices and archives. The offices should be in close proximity to the UN and other international organizations and in easy access to public transportation.

The offices should be up-to-date in terms of electronic equipment: Computers, modems, fax, etc.

Ideally, the offices would reflect the cultural diversity of the Indigenous Peoples of the world, and become vibrant and interesting places.

### **Activities**

In order to assist Indigenous representatives to participate, and take full advantage of these important activities of the UN, the office must carry out the following general activities:

- to promote the needs and aspirations of Indigenous Peoples in the UN system
- to follow through on resolutions and requests from the Indigenous Caucus
- to ensure that the UN system and its agencies take into consideration the needs of Indigenous Peoples by consistently meeting with UN officials
- to ensure that resolutions passed by the UN that aid Indigenous Peoples are carried out by the UN
- to transmit the voice of Indigenous Peoples by various means to the UN
- Inform Indigenous Peoples of the upcoming UN activities that may affect them by maintaining accurate lists of Indigenous governments and organizations.
- offer technical support to Indigenous delegations attending the UN meetings including access to computers, office space, liaison with UN officials, orientation to the UN, and other related activities
- monitor UN activities that affect Indigenous Peoples by attending UN meetings, reading reports, summarizing important information for easy access.
- Assist in organizing Indigenous Caucus meetings, keep minutes, etc.

- Provide translation services when necessary
- communicate in the major languages used by Indigenous Peoples and assist in reducing any language barriers that may exist
- when possible, monitor other international bodies that may impact on Indigenous Peoples
- assist DoCip in its activities
- other activities that are mandated by Indigenous Peoples.

#### **Funding**

The Offices will be funded by donations from Indigenous Peoples, friendly states, NGOs, foundations, and other sources. For the Geneva office, the City of Geneva, the Canton of Geneva and the State of Switzerland have indicated a willingness to support such an office. For the New York office, similar support has yet to be found. In order to accommodate donations, a foundation may be created to receive such funds.

#### **Status of Office**

The Indigenous Peoples Permanent Delegation to the United Nations should have a diplomatic status. The Offices are more than an NGO, they serve Indigenous governments. The level of diplomatic status could be negotiated.  
The status should allow easy access to work permits for staff.

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# Indigenous Peoples Permanent Delegation to the United Nations (Geneva)

## Estimated Budget

### Capital start-up costs (In Swiss Francs)

Computers (4), printers, Scanner, photocopier, modems, fax	20,000	
Office furniture	12,000	
Telephone installation	1,000	
Creation of Internet site	2,500	
Initial Office supplies	1,500	
		23,000

### Operations

Telephone, fax	7,200	
Postage	2,000	
Heat, Electricity & water	3,600	
Subscriptions	1,000	
Internet maintenance	2,400	
Insurances	3,600	
Office consumables	6,000	
		25,800

### Rent

Office space (250 Sq. Metres)		100,000
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### Salaries

Director (Chef de Mission)	60,000	
Officers (2)	108,000	
Administrative assistant	48,000	
Salary loads (10%)	11,600	
		227,600

### Travel

Two trips Internationally (air, hotel, DSA)	6,000	
Two trips in Europe (air, hotel, DSA)	3,000	
Local travel (Meetings in Switzerland, guests)	1,000	
		10,000

### Publications

Printing of 4 newsletter per year	20,000	
Translation costs (4 languages)	25,000	
Graphic work	10,000	
Mailing	5,000	
		60,000

**General Assembly expenses**

Translation services	15,000	
Boards meeting (1)	5,000	
		30,000

**Contingencies**

7% of budget		<u>29,358</u>
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<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>504,758 SF</b>
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