

WORLD GOODWILL

NEWSLETTER

A quarterly bulletin combining comment and information on world affairs with details of the work and programme of World Goodwill

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Towards a New Partnership

What we want is a new beginning

Rigoberta Menchu, Quiché from Guatemala
Winner of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize

1993 has been declared by the United Nations *The International Year for the World's Indigenous People*. Inaugurated at a special session of the General Assembly attended by over 200 indigenous leaders from every part of the globe, the year has as its theme 'a new partnership'. It will, in the words of Antoine Blanca, UN Co-ordinator for the Year, "provide an opportunity to focus the attention of the international community on one of the planet's most neglected and vulnerable groups of people".

As descendants of the original inhabitants of many lands, the world's estimated 300 million indigenous people share a rich diversity of cultures, religions and lifestyles. In nearly all of the more than 70 countries where they live they form minority communities. Over the centuries the story of their encounter with the governments and cultures which have come to dominate the world has been a tragic one. Since colonial times, invading conquerors have taken their land, introduced diseases which have wiped out whole peoples and denied the legitimacy of their beliefs, customs and languages. In recent times the pressures of our modern life have had a devastating impact, so much so that in this century more tribal peoples have become extinct than in any other century in recorded history. In a recent paper from the Worldwatch Institute, Alan T. Durning comments: "Whatever the indicator of human welfare, native peoples rank at the bottom among races."

Yet the International Year comes at a time when the fortunes of indigenous peoples are changing. There has been a remarkable resurgence in the spirit of these diverse tribal cultures. From lands as far apart as Siberia, New Zealand, Canada, Brazil, Sarawak and the Philippines the peoples of the earth have discovered a new capacity to communicate with the majority communities and to forge global alliances among themselves. In recent years many indigenous leaders have been honoured with prestigious awards in recognition of their struggle for human rights and justice. In particular, last year the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Rigoberta Menchu. At the same time there is a growing recognition amongst men and women of goodwill of the urgent need to address the rights of minorities.

There is a further reason why humanity is beginning, now, to turn its attention to the plight of the tribal peoples in our midst. In the struggle to overcome the perils of pollution and social malaise there is an urgent quest for ethics and a new spirituality that can lead humanity beyond materialism. Throughout the age of gross materialism and selfishness the indigenous peoples have been guardians of certain treasures of mind and heart which belong to this higher universal wisdom. This is not to idealise tribal communities. For amidst such a vast number of different cultures there are found both negative and positive models for the future. Yet there are many

[over

key recognitions, shared by these widely differing minority groups, that are of profound significance for our times. Two in particular stand out.

First is the characteristic sense of kinship with the earth. Australian writer, James Cowan, refers to the 'visionary geography' of the descendants of the original inhabitants of Australia. "Earlier work in the field had made me aware of a deep reservoir of energy that lay beneath the surface of Aboriginal land. When the old men talked about this energy to me, I began to realise that they were talking not of some magnetic or material force, but of a metaphysical power within landscape itself." The rivers, valleys, rocky outcrops, hillsides and plains of his people's homelands form what Tribal Filipino, Edtami Mansayagan, calls "the living pages of our unwritten history".

The second recognition which reveals a way forward for humanity as a whole is the responsibility that the present generation bears for as yet unborn future generations.

This has been most poetically and poignantly expressed in the Iroquois Indian custom of taking major decisions in the light of their likely impact on the seven generations to come.

In this issue of the Newsletter we feature an interview with Ailton Krenak, Director of Brazil's Nucleus for Indigenous Culture, and a leading figure in the global network of tribal peoples' organisations. We report on some of the issues raised by the UN international year and give details of organisations active in the struggle for justice to be accorded to indigenous people. In addition, we report on the forthcoming World Conference on Human Rights to take place in June this year in Vienna. This is a key UN forum where it is hoped that new thinking on human rights in a plural and interdependent world will lead humanity further along the path to peace, stability and well-being.

You can't imagine just how proud I feel to be a descendant, a grand-daughter of the Mayan people. Equally I could be a grandchild of the Aztec people, the Inca people, the Arawa people, or any of the peoples who lived in the Old Continent where I was born. Particularly because here, at the end of the twentieth century, there are many who think that we indigenous people are just a myth, a relic belonging to some time in the past. Sadly, there are very few people in the world who really understand and accept that indigenous people are alive and well, a living people moving towards the future.

Rigoberta Menchu

A NEW PARTNERSHIP

The "new partnership" that the International Year seeks to foster was symbolised in a remarkable, spontaneous event that took place in a meeting room at the United Nations headquarters in New York in December, 1992. The day after indigenous leaders had spoken at the General Assembly to launch the Year, they gathered to meet representatives of various UN agencies. By all accounts it was a very positive meeting, with the agencies coming up with new plans to consult with native peoples and to be more sensitive to their needs in UN development programmes. As the meeting was concluding, Thomas Banyacya, spiritual leader and messenger of the Hopi people, called on all the participants, UN officials included, to form a great circle. A report of the event notes that: "All the Elders were in the centre and Thomas called in some non-native people as well. Each silently said a prayer. The forming of the circle of unity of all people from the four corners of the Earth was more than just a symbolic act. One participant said she had never felt herself to be in such a safe place."

Perhaps, more than anything else at this time, humanity needs to foster a spirit of partnership amongst the

multitude of cultural and ethnic groups that are the building blocks of the future world society. There are said to be 6,000 spoken languages in the global family at this time, and of these some 4,000 to 5,000 are indigenous. Each language group has its own distinctive culture, its unique approach to spirituality and, above all, its sense of belonging to a particular community, tribe or national group.

Although tribal peoples share a sense of oneness with the earth and the lands of their ancestors, today by no means do all of them live in harmony with the earth. Indeed, the greatest tragedy for these peoples is the sense of loss of their lands. As the World Council of Indigenous Peoples has reported: "Next to shooting indigenous peoples, the surest way to kill us is to separate us from our part of the Earth."

By a mixture of coercion and manipulation most countries have, throughout this century, sought to assimilate native peoples into the mainstream culture and economy. Thus in North America, for example, one half of the Indian population now lives in the cities. In recent years dams

in remote areas, mining, road construction and logging have affected most of the peoples still living on traditional lands throughout the world. Thousands have been deprived of their livelihood and diseases brought in by outsiders have killed unknown numbers. Even in remote rainforest areas like Malaysian Borneo, the destruction of the environment by uncontrolled logging and the advance of more materialistic and technologically sophisticated cultures has meant that only one-tenth of the Penan people now live and hunt in the forests.

The systematic denial of the rights of these minority cultures to control their lands and maintain the integrity of their language, customs and beliefs has had a disastrous effect. As the heart of a culture loses its vitality so can its people experience a loss of meaning, self-respect and belief in the future. It is not surprising that many indigenous communities evidence a disproportionate level of the social diseases of our time: drug abuse, crime, poverty, unemployment. The UN reports that: "The majority of India's tribal peoples live below the poverty line. Life expectancy of the indigenous people of northern Russia is 18 years less than the national average. The number of unemployed Australian Aboriginals is five times the national average."

Turning the Tide

In recent decades, however, tribal peoples have organised a plethora of political, legal, cultural and spiritual activities which have begun to turn the tide of their fortunes. Impelled by both their outrage at the injustices they have experienced and by their vision of a future world immensely enriched by cultural diversity, they have established hundreds of organisations to fight for their rights through the law courts, in the political arena and in international organisations.

Although there are inevitable differences in the disputes local communities have with national governments and authorities, there are a number of common elements in the demands being placed before states. At the heart of these demands is a call for tribal ownership of remaining ancestral lands and natural resources, together with the return of some lands illegally taken in the past, and for the community to have control over such matters as the education of children, health and welfare policies. It is a call for self-governance and self-determination, part of a global process to redefine the relationship between the state and the ethnic minorities which live within it. The indigenous peoples are speaking up for their right to control their own affairs. Although there are calls for the break-up of states, and this is what national governments fear could happen, the most common theme in campaigns is for some new arrangement within existing states. In New Zealand this is expressed in the vision of a bi-cultural society which provides for "two people in one nation".

In addition, powerful arguments are being advanced in the courts for the intellectual and cultural property rights of tribal peoples to be respected. Many drugs, for example, have been developed on the basis of the knowledge of traditional healers. Drug companies have

made enormous profits from this knowledge. The granting of patents over intellectual property held collectively by tribal peoples would enable them to receive their rightful share of these profits.

As a result of increasingly skilful campaigns by indigenous communities and supporting international organisations, the public and governments of many countries are today actively thinking through the nature of the new partnership that is now called for between the indigenous and majority communities. It is inevitable that the process of building a new relationship arouses deep emotions. There is no consensus on the principle of self-government for indigenous peoples. And, as each country that has experienced the years of legal and political battles over this issue knows, there is no simple solution. In some countries, however, the conflicts and soul-searching have led to progress towards a measure of self-government for indigenous communities.

First to act was Denmark. In 1979 Denmark granted wide powers of autonomy on domestic issues to the Inuit of Greenland. Other Scandinavian governments followed. In Greenland, Norway and Sweden around 100,000 indigenous people enjoyed some form of home rule by 1992. In Canada, Nunavut, a vast territory two-fifths of the land mass of Canada, is being designated an Inuit homeland. A World Watch publication reports that the Inuit will "have exclusive mineral rights to most of the territory's iron ore, zinc and copper, and will receive financial compensation and royalties for mineral extraction on the areas of Nunavut that are not under the Inuit's legal title". In order to win these gains the Inuit had to reach compromises with the government and renounce many of their claims. They will not have complete control of resources, for the territory is to be jointly managed with the Canadian government.

Brazil, too, has seen a huge area of the Amazon rainforest, rich in natural resources, set aside for the Yanomami, giving them the right to use the land for hunting, fishing and other traditional activities. Again the agreement marks a compromise. The Yanomami will have neither mineral rights nor ownership of the land. The law requires that the government consults with them before mining and grants them a share of the profits, but some observers are sceptical as to whether the government will honour the agreement. In Colombia, Australia and New Zealand there have been moves towards granting control of resources and greater autonomy on tribal lands.

The UN's Role

The complex legal and political issues surrounding the calls for self-determination have resulted in the involvement of the United Nations as a central meeting ground where tribal peoples are pressing their claims. It was the International Labour Organisation (ILO) which pioneered early efforts to promote the rights of indigenous peoples. The first ILO Convention on the subject was in 1957. This was revised in 1989. "Together, the two Conventions recognise the historic relationship between indigenous peoples and their inhabited land and stress the rights of indigenous peoples to exercise control over their

own institutions, ways of life and economic development within the boundaries of States where they live.” Following an influential UN inquiry into discrimination against indigenous peoples, a Working Group was established in 1982. Its goals are to develop international standards concerning the rights of indigenous peoples and to review national developments that relate to the promotion and protection of these rights. The Working Group is currently preparing a draft Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which it hopes to complete by the end of 1993 for eventual proclamation by the UN General Assembly. The most recent draft affirms the principle of self-rule within the territorial integrity of States on such matters as education, culture, religion, health, housing, employment.

The Working Group is a subsidiary organ of the UN’s Human Rights Commission. Its annual meetings have become a focal point for international negotiation and reflection on the subject of indigenous rights. These meetings have become one of the largest UN forums on human rights, attended regularly by many tribal organisations. Recent meetings organised by the UN have also helped States develop their understanding of autonomy and the contribution to be made by traditional peoples to the wise management of the environment. The International Year is a further initiative by the UN to promote international co-operation on the solution of problems

faced by indigenous communities.

In spite of these far-reaching and positive developments, however, the new partnership which indigenous peoples long for is proving elusive. The spirit of partnership, quite apart from its practice, is still noticeable by its absence. The International Year is a good example. As a symbolic act it was significant and meaningful that tribal elders from all parts of the world were invited to speak to the UN General Assembly. Yet many governments chose to ignore the meeting. Less than half the UN delegations were represented to hear their words and feel the spirit of the earth which they brought into the Assembly. The Voluntary Fund established by the UN for governments and others to pay for activities during the International Year had received, by the start of the year, the paltry sum of US\$6,000.

However, it is inevitable that genuine changes of attitude will take time, for there has been a long history of exploitation and denial of rights. Yet progress is being made and that is a real sign of hope. The process of dialogue, reflection, debate and negotiation which can lead to the emergence of “a new partnership” is under way. Out of this dialogue let us hope real changes will occur and the qualities of true partnership — understanding, goodwill and respect — will come to the fore.

The World Conference of Indigenous Peoples on Territory, Environment and Development took place in Rio de Janeiro (May 25-30, 1992) at the UN Earth Summit. Indigenous peoples of the Americas, Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe and the Pacific participated. Together they endorsed what is known as the Kari-Oca Village Declaration “as our collective responsibility to carry our Indigenous minds and voices into the future”:

Kari-Oca Village Declaration

We, the Indigenous Peoples, walk to the future in the footprints of our ancestors.

From the smallest to the largest living being, from the four directions, from the air, the land and the mountains, the creator has placed us, the Indigenous Peoples upon our Mother Earth.

The footprints of our ancestors are permanently etched upon the lands of our peoples.

We, the Indigenous Peoples, maintain our inherent rights to self-determination. We have always had the right to decide our own forms of government, to use our own laws, to raise and educate our children, to our own cultural identity without interference.

We continue to maintain our rights as peoples despite centuries of deprivation, assimilation and genocide.

We maintain our inalienable rights to our lands and territories, to all our resources — above and below — and to our waters. We assert our ongoing responsibility to pass these on to the future generations. We cannot be removed from our lands. We, the Indigenous Peoples, are connected by the circle of life to our lands and environments.

We, the Indigenous Peoples, walk to the future in the footprints of our ancestors.

RESTORING THE DIALOGUE WITH NATURE

Ailton Krenak

Ailton Krenak is a leading figure in the struggle of the indigenous peoples "to live in a better world". He is the Director of the *Indian Research Centre*, a pioneering initiative of the Forest Peoples of Brazil. Since the Centre was established in the late '80s, representatives of indigenous peoples from throughout Brazil have come there to study skills and appropriate technologies they can take back to their villages. These include: wildlife management, breeding native species of fresh water fish and shrimps in captivity, breeding native plants and trees, developing regenerative agriculture, processing local fruits. The Centre is now setting up forest-based pilot projects in different parts of Brazil. Ailton Krenak is also the Director of the *Nucleus for Indigenous Culture*. Based in the Embassy of the Forest People in São Paulo, the Nucleus for Indigenous Culture seeks to "strengthen links between the forest peoples and city dwellers through cultural events".

May East, who is a co-worker of World Goodwill, recently visited Ailton Krenak at the Embassy of the Forest Peoples in São Paulo and interviewed him for the World Goodwill Newsletter.

May East asked Ailton Krenak to share his vision on the role and service of the Wise Ones, the Shamans, at this critical time of transition for humanity and the planet. He replied:

Recently I have been discussing with friends the popular song lyrics: "Let the Indian be free in the jungle. Let the Indian be free in the jungle...." And a friend asked me: "Krenak, if the wise ones stay in isolation in the jungle, how will their teachings reach out to the people in the cities who have lost the memory of the fundamental relationship between mankind and nature? Don't you think we should encourage them to travel around, to participate in conferences and gatherings in the North? Is it not contradictory to say that their values should be kept in secret?"

I started to think deeply about this. On the one hand there is an urgency to teach and communicate to these other peoples the wisdom of our ancestors, of our shamans and "pajes". But on the other hand we know the risks our shamans are exposed to each time they contact the other energies of the world. Events such as UNCED and the International Year of the Indigenous People manifest a kind of intense noise, sometimes with little content. Although they seem to be the privileged places to communicate the thinking and the ideas of the sacredness of life and the earth, and of the equilibrium of man in his passage through the earth, these places are also places of dispersion. They are places where the consumer culture is very present.

I have been observing that our most traditional shamans are holding a permanent retreat. Their way of teaching is conveyed through their own lives. Someone once asked Gandhi, what was his message. He said: "I don't have a message, my message is my life." So I think the traditional way of living of our people is the mirror anyone could look at, if they wanted, to see how to conduct themselves here in the world. I am also inspired by an inner feeling of withdrawal, because I believe that when we live in equilibrium, we are, at least, as a grain of sand, giving our contribution to the equilibrium of the whole world.

We do make efforts in planting seeds, in caring for seedlings and planting trees where there are no more forests, in cleaning rivers polluted by poisons, in revitalising lakes, so that native livingness could manifest again with force in those places. But one of the most ancient teachings we have learned is that often those places have regenerated themselves when men have stood in stillness, when men have walked away from them, sometimes even when the men have already died.

The most breathtaking places on earth are not the places where men are doing things, they are often the places where man has never been. Some of these sites, the so-called refuges of life, places where Gaia rests and restores her energies, are not where we find the technology and apparatus developed by men. It is there in the Himalayan chain, in the deep lakes of the North, in the great icebergs, within the heart of the forests; there in the Andes Ranges, where the presence of man is small and the force of life and of nature is as powerful as a volcano, as a great tempest of wind, cold hail and ice. There we find the eloquence of creation. There life has a tremendous force. Nature is shy where man is active.

May East asked Ailton Krenak if he thought it is possible to restore a dialogue with nature in places where that dialogue now no longer seems to exist, and he made the following comments:

This dialogue is possible and latent. It is something beyond dialogue, it is attunement. The reciprocity of the experience of life with the earth, with nature, with the places where the planet rests is natural. And in those places where life is deeply altered, where the quality of life is directed to other horizons, nature becomes shy not because she has impoverished herself, not because she has lost herself. Nature becomes shy because of our lack of care. Nature becomes shy because of our lack of attention. When people open their hearts and turn their attention (not the intellectual attention, but the one of the spirit) to a sun's ray that crosses the sky and touches the ground, they are restoring a subtle level of contact with life and nature. When the heart starts to beat again in unison with the cycle of the winds, the rain, the moon,

this spiritual reintegration of the man with the place where he dwells starts to unveil again and starts to run vividly inward and outwardly.

The vital experience of renewal brings new meaning to the singing of the birds, to the music of the waters. Someone who has always used water as a natural good, to quench thirst, to clean away dirt, to wash and refresh, starts to understand that he is not just relating with the liquid element but he is entering in contact with one of the elemental senses of life, with the sense of creation.

How many people use water without thinking, without being aware of the vital force they are contacting? With

no reverence they use water in the same way they manipulate other things. How many people sense a wind, a breeze, or a hurricane with the same indifference as they hear an aeroplane taking off at the airport? How many people hear the roaring of the thunder with the same disregard as the roaring sound of a motorcycle or a car? This is because some of us have forgotten where we came from and where we are returning to.

For information on the *Indian Research Centre* and the *Nucleus for Indigenous Culture* write to:
Rua Antonio Mariani 197, São Paulo S.P.
Brazil 05535-000.

FOR REFLECTION

Nature itself does not speak with a voice that we can easily understand. Neither can the animals and birds we are threatening with extinction talk to us. Who in this world can speak for nature and the spiritual energy that creates and flows through all life? In every continent are human beings who are like you but who have not separated themselves from the land and from nature.

Thomas Banyacya

All over the tropical Rainforest world, the people who are the best defenders of this remaining precious life-support system are the Forest Peoples.

Harrison Ngau, Kayan Community of Sarawak, Malaysia

We are trying to save the knowledge which shows that the forests and this planet are alive, to give it back to you who have lost this understanding.

Paulinho Payakan, Kayapo (Brazil) Indian leader

If you have come here to help me
you are wasting your time.
But if you have come because your
liberation is bound up with mine,
Then let us work together.

Lilla Watson, of the Australian Aboriginal Peoples

We speak of an attitude that must be changed. This attitude that is taught to children seems to be inherent in the society. To conquer. They always want to conquer people, rivers, mountains, nations, and now space. I think we have to have some way to see ourselves in a proper perspective.... If we continue to think that we're going to conquer the Earth and conquer space, then we will fall

and disappear. So we must teach our children the love for the land, for the future. Not for us, not for our profit. And so leaders must lead, if they want people to follow, people will only do what you do.... If you want someone to clean the yard, then you must go out and start cleaning it, and if they agree with you they'll come and help.

Oren Lyons, Faith-Keeper of the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy

At first I thought I was fighting to save Rubber Trees. Then I thought I was fighting to save the Amazon Rainforest. Now I realise I am fighting for Humanity.

Chico Mendez

Our religious creation stories are always referred to as "myths" or "legends". The words "dream", "myth" and "legend" all carry meanings of invalidity. Our religious beliefs and stories are just as valid as any other religious groups, therefore, if people are going to write or speak about them, we must insist they use the more appropriate English words such as religion, religious or creation stories and so on.

Eve D. Fesl of the Australian Koorie (Aboriginal) people

Indigenous people and their communities, and other local communities, have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognise and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development.

Rio Declaration (Principle 22)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The International Year: Information on the International Year for the World's Indigenous People is available from the United Nations at the following addresses:

Centre for Human Rights, United Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. *Department of Public Information*, Room S-1040, United Nations, New York, N.Y. 10017, USA.

Survival International "is a worldwide movement to support tribal peoples. It stands for their right to decide their own future and helps them protect their lands, environment and way of life". Survival International was established in 1969 and in its early days concentrated on researching and supporting projects with tribal peoples, especially in the fields of health and education. In recent years its emphasis has shifted to campaigning and public education.

"Survival International is the broadest, longest-serving and most effective campaigning organisation working with tribal peoples." This was the view of the Jury of the Right Livelihood Award (the alternative Nobel Prize) in selecting Survival International as a recipient of the Award in 1989. Its many success stories make heartening reading. Members of Survival International (15,000 worldwide) are encouraged to write letters to decision makers on key issues and this is proving a most effective way of supporting the tribal peoples' own struggle for their rights and their lands.

Survival International, 310 Edgware Road, London W2 1DY, UK.

Indigenous Voices Radio Network is a new initiative of the Radio for Peace International, based in the UN University for Peace, Costa Rica. IVRN aims to provide a means for indigenous peoples "to develop their own global voice, dialogue on issues, develop indigenous language programming and regular indigenous sponsored programmes and air time".

IVRN - Radio for Peace International, PO Box 88 Santa Ana, Costa Rica. Fax: 506-49-19-29.

World Rainforest Movement "is an international network of citizens' groups and individuals campaigning to defend the rainforests worldwide. One of the international campaigns of WRM is the Forest Peoples' Programme. This programme is both helping to create an effective global network of forest peoples and to promote the *Charter of the Indigenous-Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests*. The Charter was produced during a conference (Feb. 12-15, 1992) held in Penang and attended by representatives of forest-dwelling communities from the Americas, Asia, the Pacific and Africa. The Conference was facilitated by WRM. At this historic gathering the *International Alliance of the Indigenous-Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forest* was set up. The Forest Peoples' Programme is also documenting real and practical examples of community-based sustainable forest

management and helping the local people to have a decisive voice about resources used in their area.

World Rainforest Movement, 87 Cantonment Road, 10250 Penang, Malaysia.

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs "is an independent, international organisation, which supports indigenous peoples in their struggle for self-determination and against oppression". The international efforts of IWGIA are specifically oriented towards the goal of supporting indigenous people themselves so they can present their cases before the international community. IWGIA initiates and supports research projects and publishes regular newsletters, in-depth analyses of the situation of a specific people or issue and a yearbook. These publications, available in English and Spanish, are sent free of charge to indigenous groups and organisations all over the world. In other cases they are available on a subscription basis.

IWGIA, 10 Fiolstraede, DK-1171 Copenhagen K, Denmark.

Indigenous Woman is an official publication of the Indigenous Women's Network (IWN), a continental and Pacific network of women who are actively involved in work in their communities. The philosophy of IWN is "to work within the framework of the vision of our elders and through this process, to rebuild our families, communities and nations".

Indigenous Women's Network, PO Box 174, Lake Elmo, MN 55042, USA.

The Gaia Foundation, founded in 1984, is actively working with, and for, indigenous peoples in many parts of the world. The Foundation "provides consultancy and vital information about developments in the North to colleagues in the South and seeks to provide opportunities for them to influence policy and public opinion in the North". Reports that "seek to convey the Southern perspective and above all the perspective of the indigenous people themselves on current developments" are prepared and circulated to influential organisations and to governments. A number of "outstanding thinkers and activists, mainly from the South, who are working to re-define 'development' and are pioneering an ecological and culturally respectful approach to social processes and life on the planet" are related to the Gaia Foundation as 'Associates'. The Foundation promotes articles, statements and books by Gaia Associates and colleagues. *The Gaia Foundation*, 18 Well Walk, Hampstead, London NW3 1LD, UK.

Cultural Survival was founded in 1972 to help indigenous people and ethnic minorities deal as equals in their encounters with industrial society. "We insist that cultural differences are inherent in humanity, that protect-

ing this human diversity enriches our common earth. Yet in the name of development and progress, native peoples lose their lands, their natural resources, and control over their lives. The consequences often are disease, destitution, and despair for them — and war and environmental damage for us all. Cultural Survival believes that this destruction is not inevitable.” On December 10, 1992 Cultural Survival launched a three-year Indigenous Rights Campaign. The aim of this campaign is “to turn concern about indigenous human rights into concrete action and policy gains”. “We are talking not merely about the fate of tiny enclaves of people, buried in the last refuges of this earth.... We are talking about the ability of human beings to discover ways to live together in plural societies. This is the crucial issue of our times.” (David Maybury-Lewis)

Cultural Survival Inc., 53A Church Street, Cambridge MA 02138, USA.

Earth Day Honours Indigenous People: “In recognition of the United Nations declaration of 1993 as the Year of the World’s Indigenous People, Earth Day USA and the Seventh Generation Fund have formed a partnership to work with the American Indian Religious Freedom Coalition. ‘Through the many activities planned for the week of Earth Day 1993 (April 22), we will emphasize the guiding conservation ethic of Native American Earth-based wisdom,’ said Bruce Anderson, President of Earth Day USA.” The Seventh Generation

Fund (SGF) was created in 1977 by Indian community activists to provide funding and technical assistance to local Indian communities. The projects of SGF focus on the economic viability of small-scale community development; restoring indigenous forms of political and social organisation; reclaiming and protecting lands and resources; and efforts by Indian women to promote the spiritual, cultural and physical well-being of the family. *Earth Day USA*, PO Box 470, Peterborough, NH 03458, USA. *Seventh Generation Fund*, PO Box 2550, McKinleyville, CA 95521, USA.

Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation provides a “legitimate international forum” for nations and peoples “who are not represented as such in the world’s principal international organisations, such as the United Nations,... yet who often face devastating human and environmental rights abuses.... Founded in 1991, UNPO today consists of 45 Member and Observer Nations and peoples who represent over 100 million persons.... UNPO does not represent those peoples; it assists and empowers them to represent themselves more effectively”. UNPO provides professional services and facilities as well as education and training in such fields as diplomacy, international and human rights law, and environmental protection for indigenous and other unrepresented peoples.

UNPO, Javastraat 40 A, 2585 AP The Hague, The Netherlands.

The Act of Recognition

‘A New Partnership’ is the theme of the UN International Year for the World’s Indigenous People. There is more likelihood that this theme will bear fruit if the wrongs done to indigenous peoples are more openly acknowledged. Speaking at the Australian launch of the Year on December 10th, 1992, the Prime Minister, Paul Keating, did just that. His speech was described as “part of the healing process that the Aboriginal people have been waiting for”, and it included the following statements:

“If we can build a prosperous and remarkably harmonious multicultural society in Australia, surely we can find just solutions to the problems which beset the first Australians — the people to whom the most injustice has been done.

“The starting point might be to recognise that the problem starts with non-Aboriginal Australians. It begins with that act of recognition. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases, the alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice.

“With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds. We failed to ask: ‘How would I feel if this were done to me?’ As a consequence, we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us.... Down the years, there has been no shortage of guilt, but it has not produced the responses we need. Guilt is not a very constructive emotion. I think what we need to do is open our hearts a bit.”

Mr Keating went on to say that where Aboriginal Australians had been included in the life of Australia, they had made remarkable contributions. “If we have a sense of justice as well as common sense, we will forge a new partnership.”

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

VIENNA, AUSTRIA: June 14 - 25, 1993

One of the basic purposes of the United Nations is to promote and encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion. With the exception of the pursuit of peace, there is no cause with which the United Nations is more closely identified than the cause of human rights.

Throughout the world, United Nations actions have saved lives, prevented torture, won the release of prisoners, promoted health and literacy and protected the rights of refugees and displaced persons. Provisions of UN treaties have been written into national legislation, affording millions of people the legal basis for claiming respect for their rights. However, we are all too keenly aware that much work yet needs to be done throughout the world before the existing human rights laws can be a *de facto* experience for everyone. Highlighting this point, Jan Martenson, the UN past Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, recently stated: "The Universal Declaration has branched out like a mighty tree into some 70 covenants, conventions and other international instruments. But without implementation, without realising these noble undertakings as living reality for men, women and children all over the world, these branches are reduced to dead wood."

With this concern in mind, Mr. Martenson first suggested to the General Assembly in October, 1989 that the United Nations hold a World Conference on Human Rights. As a result, governments, United Nations specialised agencies and bodies, international and regional organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been invited to participate in the World Conference on Human Rights which will take place on June 14 - 25, 1993 in Vienna, Austria. These same groups have also been invited to participate and assist in pre-conference preparations, including regional meetings in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean/Latin America, and four preparatory meetings, the last of which will be held this April in Geneva.

Regional and Preparatory Meetings

As might be expected, given the variety of world views and needs especially evident between the nations of the South and those of the North, fiery debate and acrimony have characterised discussions as to what should constitute the specific agenda of the upcoming world conference. Key among the concerns expressed by developing countries is "the attempt" by industrialised countries "to impose their values on developing countries" which are still struggling with poverty and the need for political stability. Another point of contention is the tension between collective rights and individual rights and freedoms. Also, developing countries lament the trend of

industrialised countries who, they say, "employ a single category of human rights as a condition for development assistance". For example, Rosemary Semafumu, the Ugandan representative to the UN General Assembly Third Committee, stated that "political and civil rights are higher in the hierarchy than economic, social and cultural rights". She added that "the violation of individual rights to food, shelter, primary health care, safe water and sanitation threatens the right to life as surely as torture, enforced disappearance, or the denial of freedom of thought and expression". Disagreement on these issues and what was termed the lack of political will in many of the world's capitals to have a nation's human rights records subjected to international scrutiny were such that by the end of 1992 the summit organisers were doubtful that the Conference would even take place. However, a vigorous diplomatic effort in the UN General Assembly in December resulted in the approval by 140 countries of a provisional summit agenda.

This agenda calls for recommendations on: strengthening international co-operation in the field of human rights; ensuring the universality, objectivity and non-selectivity of the consideration of human rights issues; enhancing the effectiveness of UN activities and mechanisms; and securing the necessary financial and other resources for UN human rights activities. Additional agenda items include commemoration of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People and consideration of the relationship between development, democracy and the universal enjoyment of all human rights.

The goal of the regional consultations which began with representatives from over 60 African countries meeting in Tunis, Tunisia, November 2-6, was to help ensure that the World Conference would start a new phase in the international effort to establish a truly global culture of human rights. The African meeting agenda included discussions on combatting xenophobia and all forms of religious intolerance and extremism; eradicating apartheid; realising economic, social, and cultural rights; improving the humanitarian situation in Africa; and realising the right to development. This meeting's discussions resulted in the drafting of the *Tunis Declaration* to be submitted to the World Conference.

The representatives of the 34 countries at the Caribbean/Latin American meeting held in San Jose, Costa Rica, January 18-22, included in their discussions the International Year of Indigenous Peoples; the relationship between development, democracy, and the exercise of cultural, civil and political rights; recommendations for technical and financial cooperation; and recommendations to improve the coordination of mechanisms in the UN and the regional system. *The Declaration of San Jose* - the outcome of this meeting's discussions, is also to be

submitted to the World Conference. As in the African meeting, the relationship between development, democracy and human rights was emphasised especially in light of data presented by the Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean indicating that the number of people living in poverty in the region had grown from 130 million in 1980 to 195 million in 1990, with the percentage of persons living in extreme poverty also rising from 47% to 59%.

The representatives of the 31 countries attending the three-day regional Asia-Pacific meeting held in Jakarta, Indonesia, January 26-28, could not agree on a joint declaration. Antoine Blanca, Secretary-General of the World Conference took the opportunity in his address at this meeting to encourage the creation of some form of a region-wide human rights treaty and mechanism, pointing out that Asia-Pacific is the only region without one. As in the previous regional meetings, here it was also agreed that while human rights principles are universal, the application of these vary from country to country because of different cultures and levels of economic progress. Countries like Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia said they cannot support current international human rights programmes because traditional definitions of human rights do not represent Asian cultures and values. For example, while Western definitions of human rights emphasise individual choice and civil liberties, Eastern cultures traditionally put more value on community rights, discipline and respect for elders.

Apart from the preparatory and regional meetings, hundreds of other meetings and activities, including conferences, seminars and workshops have to date been held around the world. The list of these activities, detailed in the September 1992 report issued by the Secretary-General, begins with the World Congress on Human Rights held in New Delhi, India, in December, 1990 and

ends with the UNESCO sponsored Conference on Human Rights Education and Democracy culminating in Montreal, Canada, in February, 1993 after a series of regional meetings.

NGO Forum

As is becoming customary, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) will also have their own forum prior to, and parallel to, the World Conference. It is expected that some 1500 delegates will attend the NGO Forum where NGOs will suggest how to improve the human rights situation, evaluate the UN human rights programme and focus on the role of NGOs. The Secretariat of the Forum consists of the Vienna-based Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights, the Geneva-based International Service for Human Rights and representatives of human rights committees in Geneva and New York. In addition to the Forum, NGOs will organise a special exhibition at the official UN Conference, highlighting NGO commitment to the defense of human rights throughout the world.

Although definitions, priorities and emphases differ, a basic tenet shared by all conference participants is that the world can no longer tolerate systematic violations of human rights and indifference to human suffering. Readers of the Newsletter might like to join with the people of goodwill world-wide who will be holding this important Conference in mind and visualising its success in furthering progress towards a truly global culture of human rights.

For more information on the World Conference, write to the Secretariat; Clo Christina Cerna, UN Centre for Human Rights, Palais des Nations A517, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland (fax: 41-22-917-0123); or, Linda Rabben, Clo Centre for Development of International Law, 1528 18th Street NW, Washington DC, 20036, USA (fax:202-462-4941)

How can order be restored? How can there be fair distribution of the world's resources? How can the Four Freedoms become factual and not just beautiful dreams? How can true religion be resurrected and the ways of true spiritual living govern the hearts of men? How can a true prosperity be established which will be the result of unity, peace and plenty?

There is only one true way and there are indications that it is a way towards which many millions of people are turning. Unity and right human relations — individual, communal, national and international — can be brought about by the united action of the men and women of goodwill in every country.

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