



International Indian Treaty Council



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UNITED STATES QUESTIONED BY UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, FREE PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT AND THE PROTECTION OF SACRED AREAS

Geneva, March 17, 2014: The review of United States (US) compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) took place on March 13 and 14, 2014, in Geneva, Switzerland. Members of the United Nations Human Rights Committee (HRC), the body charged with reviewing the compliance of the 167 States which have ratified the ICCPR, questioned the US on a range of human rights concerns and violations presented in Alternative or "Shadow" Reports by Indigenous Nations and Peoples, human rights organizations and civil society groups leading up to the review as well as in briefings held during the week.

Questions proposed by the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) and 27 other Indigenous co-submitters of the Indigenous Peoples' Consolidated Alternative ("Shadow") Report, along with other reports submitted by Indigenous Nations and Peoples, provided the basis for the Committee's questions addressing the rights of Indigenous Peoples. These included questions about US implementation of the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, measures to ensure that consent of Indigenous Peoples is obtained and that sacred areas are protected from desecration, contamination, disruption, urbanization, tourism, and extractive industries taking place both in and outside of Indigenous Peoples' recognized lands and territories.

Indigenous delegations in Geneva appreciated that Committee members asked the US these and other important questions. However, they were far from satisfied by the US government's responses as presented by representatives of the Departments of State, Justice, Homeland Security, Defense, Immigration, Indian Affairs, and Health and Human Services. Most of the US responses to the Committee's questions about violations of Indigenous Peoples' rights were presented by Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs.

Carletta Tilousi, Havasupai Nation, commented after the Committee's questioning of the US: "We are pleased to be able to have the opportunity to bring the Grand Canyon uranium mining issue to the international arena. The Department of the Interior is on alert now and we hope that they follow up, not just with Havasupai but with other tribes living around the Grand Canyon. However I am displeased with his response, it was a wash-over kind of statement provided to UN. No real commitment, I am saddened to say." Petuuche Gilbert, Acoma Pueblo, attending for the Indigenous World Association, agreed that, "Kevin Washburn was elusive in his remarks on free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) when he responded to questions raised by three Committee members specifically on that issue. In jest, he remarked that FPIC was not covered by ICCPR."

Near the conclusion of the session, Mr. Washburn offered what was perhaps his most candid response to the Committee: "Our job will never be done as long as the US occupies North America," he said.

The HRC will issue its Concluding Observations regarding the US review, along with its recommendations to the US for improved compliance, by March 28, 2014, when the current session concludes. It will be posted on the HRC web page <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/>. For more information contact IITC Legal Counsel Danika Littlechild, danika@treatycouncil.org, Consulting Attorney June L. Lorenzo, junellorenzo@aol.com, or IITC Executive Director Andrea Carmen: andrea@treatycouncil.org.

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