

RIGHTS OF THE INDIGENOUS UN MOMENT 12/5/16 (the day before the ordered evaluation of the protestors and the decision to halt the construction)

In keeping with the results of our earlier survey, here is topic 4. Information from previous UN Moments and the UUUNO are available in the rear.

Today's mini focus is on indigenous people: the more than 370 million of them from at least 5,000 different groups, living in 90 countries on 6 continents worldwide. Collectively they often face discrimination and exclusion from political and economic power.

Familiar issues of Native Americans in the United States have worldwide similarities: displacement by war, government action or environmental disasters, removal from ancestral lands, exclusion from decision making, often marginalization, exploitation, forceful assimilation and subjection to repression, torture and murder when they speak out in defense of their rights. They are 5% of the world's population but 15% of the world's poorest.

August 9<sup>th</sup> has been designated by the United Nations as the International Day of World's Indigenous Peoples. Maybe next year we can honor that day here.

Work on a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples began in 1982. Expressions like "making our planet safe for the seventh generation to follow us" taken from the words of Chief Sealth in Seattle became popular. In 1992 the Earth Summit heard the collective voices of indigenous peoples as they expressed their concerns about deteriorating state of their lands, territories or environments. 1993 became the International Year followed by the first International Decade (1995-2014) and the Second Decade (2005-2015) mandating all agencies to give special focus to the needs of these groups in their work.

In 2000 a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was established. The landmark Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples finally passed the General Assembly in 2007. (While Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States did not ratify the declaration at first for fear of establishing claims on the land, President Obama did a lot of consultation for input and accepted it as a non-binding document.

The voices of our first Americans we're hearing now in North Dakota concerning the building of a pipeline through the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation are being heard. 500 Unitarian Universalist Ministers are lending their personal support to the many thousands who are there. The UN Human Rights Committee among others in the UN are following events closely. In August 2016 Expert Members of the Permanent Forum issued their first statement in support of the Sioux Nation. A second statement came on 11/7 after the Grand Chief spent several days there consulting all sides. Some 380 cultural and sacred sites along the pipeline had already been

destroyed and 412 people arrested. Numbers have increased since then along with the tanks and military presence.

In addition the Office of the Commissioner of Human Rights also plays a pivotal role in implementing the Declaration – issuing a statement on October 28<sup>th</sup> in defense of the Sioux tribe calling for compliance with the Declaration and good faith consultation with the Sioux people and obtaining their free and informed consent of actions taken to resolve their concerns. Halting the construction of the pipeline being built by the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Energy Transfer LLC Corporation is the position of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right of the indigenous peoples. You are welcome to look over a copy of the Declaration and the UN statements I referenced.

Thank you for your kind attention to this UN Moment.