

*Action on Draft resolution with annexed the Declaration on the
Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Explanation of vote/Reservation*

Madam President,

The Republic of Suriname places great importance on the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of indigenous peoples. With the adoption today of this historic document the international community came to an agreement on the principles to govern the rights of indigenous peoples.

Suriname joined this political consensus today, despite the fact that we still have concerns on several aspects that are mentioned in the text. Moreover the Government is extremely constrained to fulfill the numerous and lofty ambitions of the Declaration.

Aware of the fact that indigenous and tribal peoples make up a sizable portion of the Surinamese population and therefore contribute to our multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society, we deemed it appropriate to respond to this Declaration.

We express concern that the process that lead to the changes agreed to among several groups were not conducted in an open, inclusive and transparent manner and we hope that this course of action will not set precedents for future negotiations to take place in the ambit of the United Nations.

As regards the references to **the right of self determination** I would like to note that the constitution of the Republic of Suriname recognizes and respects the right of nations to self-determination and national independence on the basis of equality, sovereignty and mutual benefit.

In this regard it can not be understood for any group or people to initiate any activity that would jeopardize the territorial integrity and political unity within the State.

On the provisions of ‘**free, prior and informed consent**’ my delegation would like to state that this concept should not be understood as an encroachment of the rights and duties of the State to pursue society’s interest by developing its natural resources and achieving sustainable development and improving the lives of the population as a whole.

We accept the fact that the State should seek prior consultation in order to prevent unjustified disregard for human rights. The level, nature and extent of such consultations depend in every instance on the specific circumstances. Consultation should not be viewed as an end in itself but should serve the purpose of respecting the interests of those who traditionally possessed and used the lands, i.e. the indigenous and tribal peoples.

The Surinamese constitution clearly states that natural riches and resources are the property of the nation and shall be used to promote economic, social and cultural development. It furthermore states that the nation has the inalienable right to take complete possession of its natural resources in order to utilize them to the benefit of the economic, social and cultural development of the country.

We express the hope that all groups in society will follow the path of constructive dialogue and peaceful coexistence and in this regard we hope that this Declaration will be placed in its exact political context.

Finally Madam President,

The Republic of Suriname solely recognizes this document as a political document and not as an instrument where legal rights or duties can be derived from.

I thank you.