

PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
COMMITTEE ON JURIDICAL AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS

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Working Group to Prepare the
Draft American Declaration on the Rights
of Indigenous Peoples

COMMENTS OF THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ON THE
“SESSION OF REFLECTION” DRAFT AGENDA

The Permanent Mission of the United States presents its compliments to the General Secretariat, and has the honor to refer to the request of the Chairman of the Working Group to prepare a draft American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for comments on the draft agenda for the Session of Reflection, distributed October 30, 2007. The U.S. has reviewed the Chairman's suggestions and hereby submits its proposals to help shape the guidelines and agenda for the Session. We respectfully request that the Secretariat distribute these proposals for considerations by member states prior to the next meeting of the Working Group.

Please accept renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

Sincerely,

J. Robert Manzanares
Interim Permanent Representative

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The U.S. agrees there should be substantial discussion of our **next steps in light of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**. In light of this document and the challenges it poses, how best can the OAS advance the protection of indigenous rights in the Americas? We agree with other delegations that a half-day on the agenda of the Reflection Session is probably sufficient time for this discussion.

The U.S. shares the concerns of Argentina, Brazil, and other delegations regarding the proposal of a **D.C. office for representatives of the Indigenous Peoples Caucus**. It is unclear whether the CAAP will approve funding the office out of the Regular Fund, as doing so would likely raise questions as to whether the OAS should fund similar offices for other ongoing negotiations. It would also be difficult to raise sufficient funds from member states through special contributions.

Regarding item 5 on the draft agenda for the Session of Reflection, **Consideration of New Proposals**, the U.S. encourages all member states to present proposals for concrete activities that the OAS can undertake in over this year in support of indigenous rights in the hemisphere.

The U.S. believes that focusing on continued, lengthy negotiations on an OAS Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which covers the same topics as the recently adopted UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples, does not benefit in practical ways the welfare of indigenous peoples in the Americas. The OAS should be a mobilizing force at the forefront of action on indigenous rights.