



Indigenous Leaders Sign Paris Declaration

Indigenous leaders meeting at the December 1991 NGO conference "The Roots of the Future" in Paris signed a declaration demanding that governments and international organizations guarantee the rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination and control over their natural resources. The declaration rejects the celebration of the "Quincentennial of the Discovery of America" and states that "the 11th of October, 1492 was the last day of freedom for the Indigenous Peoples of America". The signers also demand the right of Indigenous Peoples to participate in the UN Conference on Environment and Development to be held in June in Brazil. The Indigenous leaders wish to present an alternative modal for sustainable development based on the traditional harmonious relationship between Indians and the environment. They reject the western development

modal based on a market economy which only benefits the powerful and which is responsible for the destruction of the environment through over exploitation of natural resources.

The following is the introduction to the declaration:

We, the Indigenous Peoples of the world have been constructing, since the ancestral times, a culture, civilization, history and a view of the world which have permitted us to co-exist harmoniously with nature. This normal process was interrupted in America in 1492



Letter from the Indigenous Delegates present at the Palace of Nations in Geneva Switzerland, to the Pope.

Geneva, August 1, 1991

Chief of State of the Vatican
Pope John Paul II
Rome, Italy

The indigenous delegates present at the Palace of Nations, in Geneva, Switzerland, in debate regarding the Universal Declaration of the rights of indigenous people, convened by the "Working Group of Indigenous People" of the United Nations, hereby present and declare:

In view of the declaration on May 3, 4, 1493, of the Papal Bull INTER CETERA, by which territories of indigenous people are conceded to Spain and Portugal, without taking into account the material or spiritual rights of the indigenous people in case of ABYA-YALA (America) and other parts of the world;

In defense of the sacred rights of the indigenous people, and in promotion of human dignity and harmony that should reign among humanity on this planet,

For all these purposes:

1) we demand from the vatican state a denunciation of the unilateral treaty Pope Alejandro

VI, as being contrary to the Universal Human Rights of Peoples.

2) whereas the year 1993 completes 500 years of a supposed spiritual conquest without clear rectification of this universal injustice, allowing the nation-states that have benefited from the inheritance of Pope Alejandro VI to continue programmes of genocide and ethnocide, denying the indigenous people the recuperation of a harmony based on reciprocal human respect, we demand that the Papal Bull of May 3, 4, 1493 INTER CETERA be annulled.

3) we direct John Paul II to accede to universal concepts of justice including the spiritual and material rights of indigenous peoples, in furtherance of life, harmony of human beings with our Sacred Mother, and the spiritual peace of the Great Creator in accord with the cosmovision of each one of our indigenous peoples, free from all oppression.

Thus we proclaim in the name of Human Dignity, in harmony with our Mother Nature and in the Spirit of Truth.

Signed, the indigenous delegates, and organizations.

by the European invasion of the continent and has meant genocide, the negation of our culture, the violation of our human rights, racial discrimination, the usurpation of our natural resources and the occupation of our territories and sacred places. Currently the Indigenous Peoples find themselves very affected by the necessity created by the economic and cultural system imposed by the great powers and governments. At the same time we have contributed to the "development", sacrificing our peoples and resources without receiving any compensation.

For a copy of the full text send \$3 to SAIC.