



photo: SAIC

Hundreds of Indigenous people and supporters gather at the UN for the opening Year Indigenous Peoples, Dec. 1992

UNITED NATIONS DECLARES A DECADE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

During the United Nations World Conference of Human Rights that took place in Vienna last June, many Indigenous Organizations including CONIC, proposed to the Conference to declare a UN Decade of Indigenous Peoples. Nobel laureate, Rigoberta Menchu had also proposed the Decade in her speech.

The General Assembly of the United Nations on its forty eighth session approved the "International Decade of the World's Indigenous People".

The Decade was proposed by the Australian Government and seconded by the governments of Canada, Bahamas, Barbados, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, El Salvador, Grenada, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Marshall Islands, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Norway, New Zealand, Peru, Dominican Republic, Surinam and Trinidad and Tobago.

Several Indigenous representatives lobbied the government delegates trying to get support for the Decade. Rigoberta Menchu addressed the General Assembly of the UN. Atencio Lopez of the United Kunas for Napguana was representing CONIC, also Alejandro Argumedo, Quechua from Peru and Board member of SAIC was present.

One of the Considerations of the Resolutions read: "Recalling its resolution proclaiming 1993 as the Year of the World's Indigenous People, with a view to strengthening international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by Indigenous People in the areas of, human rights, the environment, development, education and health..."

Proclaims: The International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, starting on December 10 of 1994, and reserving the period between January 1st and December 9th for Planning the Decade..."

The United Nations also suggested that before and during the sessions of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations that will take place in Geneva from July 25th to the 29th, 1994, Indigenous representatives would be consulted in order to plan the activities of the Decade.

The United Nations has established a Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations to provide financial assistance to representatives of Indigenous communities and organizations in order to enable them to participate in the meeting of the Working Group. In 1993 over 30 participants were supported by the Fund.

Further information and application forms can be obtained by writing to:

Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations
United Nations, Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 20
Switzerland