

# 2ND INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Salle V, Palais des Nations , Geneva, 19 - 20 July 2001

*Sponsors:*

*ChildRights International Research Institute  
CORE Network on Indigenous Children*

## **REPORT**

### **Overview of Meeting :**

The Second International Workshop on Indigenous Children and Youth met for one and one-half days on Thursday afternoon 19 to July and Friday 20 July 2001. The purpose of the meeting was to ensure that indigenous people are informed about current international events impacting one the lives of indigenous young people and to promote participation in these events and processes.

### **Thursday Afternoon:**

- **UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPECIAL SESSION ON CHILDREN (UNGASS)**  
*Anna Pinto, CORE Network on Indigenous Children*

The Thursday program was devoted to a detailed presentation and discussion of the upcoming United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children (UNGASS) to be held in New York on September 19-21, 2001. There was a detailed presentation, analysis and discussion of the proposed UNGASS outcome document, "A World Fit Children." It is this document which is intended to outline governmental child rights goals for the next ten years.

Members of the Workshop discussed possible changes that could still be made to the text of the outcome document in order to make it more responsive to the concerns of indigenous children. Paragraphs that had not yet been adopted by governments were reviewed and particular sections were singled out for revision. The proposed changes will be completed during the Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

### **Friday Morning:**

- **BRIEFING: SECOND WORLD CONGRESS AGAINST COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN YOKOHAMA, 17 -20 DECEMBER 2001**  
*Hélène Sackstein, Focal Point on Sexual Exploitation of Childen -- NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Switzerland*

Ms. Sackstein, who is the director of the Focal Point on Sexual Exploitation of Children within the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, presented a thorough picture of the background of the Second World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and the events that will be leading up to the World Congress in Yokohama. While the World Congress itself will get the most public attention, participation is already being decided and opportunities to be among those attending will be most open to young people. Ms Sackstein explained that there will be many regional meetings just preceding the World Congress and that these provide an excellent chance to participate and to have an impact on the outcome of the World Congress. She urged Workshop members to find out when the regional meetings would be held in their areas and to take an active part in them.

Each member of the Workshop received a packet of information about the World Congress in Yokohama which included: publicity for the World Congress; a copy of the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action from the First World Congress in 1996; three issues of the newsletter “ Yokohama Update;” and two booklets about ILO Convention No. 182, on the Worst Forms of Child Labour; in addition to information about the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Focal Point. These were distributed in English, French, and Spanish.

Members of the Workshop asked many questions about what constitutes child sexual exploitation. Some members wanted to know if forcing children to marry in order to obtain cattle or a dowry was sexual exploitation. The answer was affirmative. Ms. Sackstein defined sexual exploitation as any sexual act done for a reward – whether the reward is monetary or for protection. On the other hand, the answer to the question about Female Genital Mutilation was much more complicated due to the difficulty in analyzing the cultural rewards and benefits against the extreme harms and dangers which amount to violence against children.

Workshop members were encouraged to visit the focal point web site on Yokohama: <http://focalpointngo.org> and to call Ms. Sackstein if they needed more information.

Ms. Sackstein may be contacted at: <info@focalpointngo.org>

- **BRIEFING: CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT – INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF CHILD SOLDIERS, INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT AND FOLLOW -UP**  
*Rory Mungoven , International Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers*

Mr. Mungoven began his briefing by pointing out the difficulties in defining the words “child” and “soldier.” First, there is the obvious question of age and at what time is a child old enough to be categorized as a soldier. He explained that the International Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers follows the definition of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – age eighteen as the end of childhood.

The definition of what makes a child a soldier is much more complicated. It is not just restricted to children carrying guns. Arguably, any child who is involved with the military -- whether the troops are government or insurgent -- is a child soldier. This includes both boys and girls of any age even though their tasks may be as benign as gathering water and carrying supplies or cooking and cleaning. Children may start out as messengers, porters or spies and eventually end up on the front lines or in such dangerous activities as searching for landmines. Mr. Mungoven pointed out that once some children are used by the armed forces, life becomes more dangerous for all children, since even the innocent, non-combatants may be perceived as threats and, therefore, become targets.

Workshop members shared their war experiences with Mr. Mungoven, pointing out that not only is there a high percentage of indigenous children who are forced to fight, and that in many places conflicts are actually being waged on indigenous land or indigenous land is being used for military training.

After a brief introduction and discussion of the document, the Workshop adopted a “Statement on Indigenous Children and Armed Conflict.” Mr. Mungoven gave everyone a copy of the excellent booklet “Stop Using Child Soldiers.”

Mr. Mungoven may be contacted at: <info@childsoldiers.org>

## **Friday Afternoon:**

- **BRIEFING: THIRD WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM – RELEVANCE FOR INDIGENOUS CHILDREN**

*Professor Joshua Cooper, University of Hawaii and director of the Hawaiian Institute for Human Rights.*

Professor Cooper brought Workshop members up to date on developments leading toward the Third World Conference Against Racism and the extent to which indigenous issues will figure in the Racism Conference. He noted that institutional memory is very short and that few people recall the two earlier racism conferences. He pointed out that the two previous conferences had been held in Geneva and had focused on the evils of the South African policy of Apartheid. Significantly, the Third Racism conference is taking place during the latter part of August in South Africa – the very country which was previously held out to the international community as being the most racist. At the present time, although there are some indigenous matters that will be considered at the conference, it does not appear that indigenous children will be on the agenda.

Professor Cooper suggested a number of possible ways that Workshop members who will be attending the Racism conference might bring indigenous children to the attention of participants, including posters, post cards, etc. He urged members to participate in the Conference.

Professor Cooper may be contacted at: <joshua@ hawaii.edu>

- **BRIEFING: NEW INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' MECHANISMS AT THE UNITED NATIONS**

- Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
- Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples

*Wilton Littlechild, Q.C. Ermineskin Cree, Hobema, Alberta, Canada*

Mr. Littlechild explained the current status and connected responsibilities of the two new mechanisms established by the UN Commission on Human Rights for the protection of indigenous peoples' rights. Documents were distributed which contained the mandates of the both the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

It was noted that paragraph three of the Special Reappporteur's mandate specifically applies to the indigenous child and those attending the Workshop were encouraged to press the Special Rapporteur to act immediately to fulfill this part of his mandate. It is anticipated that the Special rapporteur will be Rudolfo Stavenhagen of the Inter-American Human Rights Institute.

Mr. Littlechild explained that the Permanent Forum will have sixteen members – eight governmental and eight indigenous representatives. Membership in the Permanent Forum is still in the process of being decided and nominations are currently being considered. It was pointed out that the Permanent Forum can and should be approached to make the issues and concerns of indigenous children and youth a primary priority.

Also discussed was the possible effect that establishment of the Permanent Forum might have on the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP), that it might bring about dissolution of WGIP and what effect this might have on the scheduling of future Workshops.

Mr. Littlechild may be contacted at: <jwlittle@incentre.net>

- **BRIEFING: COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD,** *Denise Allen, NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Geneva*

Ms. Allen gave detailed information about the responsibilities of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to submit reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Convention's monitoring body) on the steps that States Parties have taken to implement the Convention in their countries. She described the reporting process, examination of reports by the Committee and the Committee's Concluding Observations. She also explained the purpose of the Committee's "Pre-Sessional" meetings and how important it is for indigenous groups to draft independent reports for the Committee to consider as it prepares for the examination of each State Party's report.

She urged Workshop participants to check the Committee's schedule to discover the time when the State Party report for their country will be examined and to prepare an alternative report for the Committee well in advance of that date. She also indicated that the Committee is usually willing to meet with persons who have submitted such reports and at the present time the NGO Group can provide some travel funding for this purpose. Ms. Allen distributed the NGO Guide to submitting reports to the Committee in English, French and Spanish, as well as a schedule of the States Parties reports that the Committee will examine in the next three years.

Ms. Allen also discussed the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and their outreach program, which can be used to enable indigenous groups to interact with their national NGOs for the purpose of obtaining additional support.

Finally, Ms. Allen described the Children's Rights Information Network (CRIN), the content of their web site and other services. She urged members of the Workshop to join CRIN and to tell other indigenous groups about this resource. Documents were distributed that contained information about CRIN and membership applications.

During the question and answer period that followed, Ms. Allen suggested that Workshop members approach the Committee on the Rights to request that they devote their 2002 General Discussion Day to the indigenous child.

Ms. Allen can be reached at: <dallen@tiscalinet.ch.>

- **BRIEFING: INTERNET RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIGENOUS CHILD,** *Cynthia Price Cohen, ChildRights International Research Institute, New York City*

Dr. Cohen gave a brief overview of child rights information gathering and research sources, such as CRIN. She devoted most of her presentation to an explanation of how to use the web site of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to obtain information about implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. She distributed a one page document that gave the steps to follow to obtain copies of the text of: State Party reports, Summary Records (which contain the dialogue that the Committee conducts with State Parties); the Committee's Concluding Observations on a State Party's report; annual reports of the Committee, its General Comments on the Convention and other action by the Committee relative to the Convention's monitoring process. She encouraged Workshop members to use this information to assure that their countries live up to their Convention obligations.

**Out comes:**

- Members of the Workshop targeted several paragraphs of the draft UNGASS outcome document that were considered in need of revision if they are to be responsive to the needs of indigenous children. An alternative draft of these paragraphs will be drafted during the WGIP. Their recommendations will be conveyed to the UNGASS by appropriate means.
- Members of the Workshop agreed to pay special attention to regional planning sessions for the Yokohama conference on commercial sexual exploitation of children and to encourage youth participation in both the regional and Yokohama meetings.
- Members of the Workshop adopted a “Statement on Indigenous Children and Armed Conflict,” to be submitted to the Indigenous Council and the UN Working Group in Indigenous Populations.
- Members of the Workshop also adopted an omnibus set of recommendations are being submitted to the Indigenous Council and the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations. These recommendations cover such matters as: plans for establishing an annual International Workshop on Indigenous Children and Youth and a World Coalition for Indigenous Children and Youth, as well as suggestions for action on behalf of indigenous children by the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and a request for the Committee on the Rights of the Child to devote its 2001 General Discussion Day to the Indigenous Child..
- Members of the Workshop agreed to immediately begin planning for the Third International Workshop on Indigenous Children and Youth to be held in 2002.
- Persons and groups wishing to join the Planning Committee for the 2002 Third International Workshop on Indigenous Children and Youth should contact one of the persons below:

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**THE WORKSHOP WAS CONDUCTED IN ENGLISH, WITH INTERPRETATION IN  
SPANISH AND FRENCH.**

*Interpreters: Svetlana Voutova-Gross (French) and Inés Hidalgo-Châtelain (Spanish)*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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