

UFER

International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and

An idea in action

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UFER News
2007-01

Editorial

Some time ago, you received our last General Assembly report. If you read it, you will remember that we proposed to send you shorter and more frequent Bulletins preferably through E-mail. This is our first Bulletin of such kind and we hope it will be of interest to you. Your comments are of course always welcome.

We had requested you to let us know whether you wish to receive the Bulletin by E-mail. Sending it by E-mail costs less and you can receive the information more rapidly. Very few members responded to our request and we do need your cooperation.

That is why **we insist that you complete the attached questionnaire** and send it to us as soon as possible. You can ask us (info@ufer-international.org) to send you the questionnaire by E-mail.

We do not want to put pressure on those who do not have the Internet connection: we will continue to send the Bulletin by mail to those who request it.

We would also like to remind those who have not yet done so to up date their membership fees for 2006*. Those fees enable us to pursue our work and to send you the Bulletin.

Some of us live in regions that have been deserted by peace for so long that it seems as if it will never come back...

Others fight for justice, against exclusion ... and do not see the end...

We all feel bound together in those situations of pain and despair all over the world.

We all carry in us this gnawing preoccupation for the survival of the planet which we have terribly mishandled

In this context, our prime task is to protect and revive hope, in us, around us, everywhere we can. Because it is such hope which will give us the energy, day after day, to create the new world we dream of.

This is what we wish you all for the year 2007.

**For the Board of Directors,
Marielle Peltier, President**

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- * **25 € or 32 US\$ to be paid to the following account:**
- **Banque FORTIS**
 - **IBAN : BE 50 0013 6970 0018**
 - **BIC: GEBABEBB**

NEWS FROM THE UNITED NATIONS

1. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Since its creation by the General Assembly, on 15 March 2006, the Human Rights Council – which succeeded the Commission on Human Rights and is composed of 47 Member States – held two ordinary sessions and three extraordinary sessions in Geneva. A third session will take place from 27 November to 8 December.

First session

It took place from 19 to 30 June 2006. After the usual speeches (85) delivered by high-level personalities, the Council worked on the establishment of new mechanisms. It set up two working-groups: one to make concrete recommendations on the **functioning of all the mandates, mechanisms, functions and attributions inherited from the former Commission on Human Rights** and the other one to **examine the modalities of the periodic review of the actions of all the Member States of the UN in the field of human rights**.

It also adopted the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** as well as the **International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance**.

- <http://www.unhchr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/view01/13C5B111105739B5C125719F0077680D?opendocument>

Second Session

It took place from 18 September to 6 October 2006. It was essentially dedicated to **the examination of the reports which were to be submitted this year to the former Commission on Human Rights**. The reports were submitted by those entrusted with mandates (Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Presidents of Working Groups) and followed by interactive dialogues between members of the Council, observer states and non governmental organizations. These reports dealt either with thematic issues (racism, indigenous people, violence against women, children in armed conflicts, rights to housing, food, etc.) or countries (Burundi, Cuba, Sudan, etc.). It also examined a report on the situation of detainees in Guantanamo Bay.

UFER joined other NGOs in a statement on violence against women.

The draft resolutions will be examined at the resumed session, on 27 November.

- <http://www.unhchr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/view01/438EC081B53596BBC12571FF00696A30?opendocument>

Extraordinary sessions

The first and third sessions (5-6 July & 11 November) dealt with violations of human rights in Palestinian occupied territories where the situation gravely deteriorated. Each time the Council asked Israël to put an end to its exactions and decided to send a mission of enquiry. In its second session (11 August), the Council firmly condemned the violations of

human rights perpetrated in Lebanon by Israël and decided to send also a mission of enquiry.

- http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/specialsession/A_HRC_S1_3.pdf
- http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/specialsession/A.HRC.S-2.2_en.pdf
- <http://www.unhcr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/view01/0BACBF5D0876ED54C125722700706F1C?opendocument>

Les ONG – UFER

They continue to participate in the work of the Council with the same privileges – at least for the time being - which they enjoyed during the existence of the Commission, which means that they can make oral and written interventions. They will, however, have to adapt to the methods of work of the new body. On the occasion of the two ordinary sessions, they organized parallel activities on different subjects in order to inform the participants in the Council meetings about specific situations of human rights violations.

2. DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST THE GIRL CHILD



The 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women will be held in New York from 26 February to 9 March 2007 and will have as its main topic: *the elimination of discrimination and violence against the girl child*. Several members of UFER will take part in it, among which young women from different countries. The coordinator of the delegation will be Sharon Joslyn from the Grail (E-Mail: bronxgrail@juno.com)

An expert seminar was organized in Florence, Italy, from 25 to 28 September in preparation to the next session of the Commission. Berhane Raswork, member of UFER Committee, was among the experts. For more information, consult the following website:

- <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/51sess.htm>
- http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/forum/forum-daw-disc_viol_girlchild.htm
- http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/elim-disc-viol-girlchild/egm_elim_disc_viol_girlchild.htm

INCREASE OF ANTI-BLACK RACISM

We witness an increase of anti-Black racism in Europe, whether they are police brutalities, discriminatory legislation and practices or physical lynching by neo-nazi groups. Too often politicians remain indifferent to these violations, or even encourage them, directly or indirectly.

It is in that context that the **Platform for Reflection and Action against Anti-Black Racism – CRAN** was established in Bern, Switzerland, in 2002. This organization was founded by Africans and Swiss with the aim of reflecting on the causes of and to act against acts of anti-Black racism in Switzerland and more broadly in Europe.

CRAN organized, on 17 & 18 March 2006, at the World Council of Churches headquarters in Geneva, with the support of the Federal Commission against Racism, the **First European Conference on Anti-Black Racism** which is part of the follow-up of the Conference on Racism organized by the UN in Durban (2001). At the end of the deliberations, the participants adopted a **Declaration** in which they considered, among others, that “anti-Black racism is deeply rooted in the myths, ideologies and dogmatism related to the three religions of the book, which have been circulated for centuries during the inferiorisation and negation of Blacks.”

The **Declaration** also recalls “the fundamental role played by Blacks since antiquity in the intellectual, political, economical, social, cultural and spiritual development of the European societies.” It requests the European governments to “do their utmost to guarantee the principle of co-integration contained in the covenant of *living together in esteem of our diversity* ... (and) to grant significant participation ... in actions in favour of the fight against anti-Black racism ... but particularly in respect to actions undertaken by organisations of the black community.”



Cruz Melchor EYA NCHAMA, member of the Board of Directors of UFER, made an intervention in the conference, as President of the Municipal Council of Grand-Saconnex (a suburb of Geneva), in which he reminded participants of previous Pan-African conferences which were held in Europe at the beginning of the XXth century. He said, in conclusion, that “the integration is a process, a program of awareness, of consideration of the receiving environment, which must be chosen and put into practice by the foreigner, in as much as this will is accepted by the receiving environment.”

➤ <http://www.cran.ch>

ENCOUNTERS WITH FIRST PEOPLES OF CANADA & QUÉBEC

By *Raymonde Martineau*

I first became aware of the situation of the First Peoples (Indians, Inuit and Métis) in Canada and Québec, in Geneva. In my function as Officer in charge of relations with NGOs at the United Nations Office in Geneva, I had the possibility of following the debates on discrimination against indigenous peoples and of meeting several representatives of these peoples. Among them many came from Canada and Québec.



When I came back to my country, five years ago, one of my priorities was to increase my knowledge about the situation of these peoples and to try to sensitize young people about it. With that in mind, I started to visit a certain number of reserves at the invitation of representatives I had met in Geneva. Last year, I visited the Mohawks near Montreal as well as the Crees in Alberta. This year, together with Gaëtane Gascon, I went on a long journey on the north shore of the St-Lawrence River and in the north of Québec in order to meet members of the Innu nation (Montagnais) in different reserves.

- **Some statistical data**

There are in Québec ten Indian nations with a total of 68,738 inhabitants, 48,236 of which live on reserves. The Innus number 15,636, 11,069 in reserves. The Inuit – not to be confused with the previous ones – are 10,202, among which 9,508 live on reserves. ¹ The total number of Indians, Métis and Inuit in Canada is 976,300.²

The reserves were created at the time of the Canadian Confederation in 1867. “A reserve is tract of land, the legal title to which is held by the Crown, set apart for the use and benefit of an Indian band. Some bands have more than one reserve”.³ A band is a specific group or community of Indians. There are 614 bands in Canada.⁴ A band is governed by a council elected by the band. It receives its funds from the federal government and has the responsibility of managing it to the benefit of the community. This means that practically all initiatives taken by the community must receive the agreement of the Band Council, which in turn is financially dependent of the federal government. This situation seems quite similar to the one of the Bantustans of South Africa, doesn't it?

The situation varies from one reserve to another. Some have economic activities which enable them to have more autonomy. Others, like the Innu reserve of Matimekossh

¹ Indian and Northern Affairs in Canada, 2005

² Idem, 2003

³ Terminology Guide, Indian and Northern Affairs in Canada: http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/wf/index_e.html

⁴ Indian and Northern Affairs in Canada

(Shefferville), where we spent a few days, are practically completely dependent on the money given to the Band Council by the government.

- ***The reserve of Matimekosh***

About 700 Innus live in Matimekosh. They gradually moved to the neighbouring town of Shefferville after the closing of the iron mine in 1982. The reserve and the town form practically one entity now. Very few other inhabitants remain. From the material point of view, there is nothing striking. The Innus live in modern houses and they have social and health services. But what moral deprivation: alcoholism, drogues, violence (family and others), suicide, internal conflicts, etc!

The situation is not better in education. I was told that not a single pupil has completed his or her secondary school for the last ten years. The majority of the teachers are non-Indigenous and they do not stay very long. The administration of the reserve is also entrusted to non-Indigenous hired by the Band Council. The Innus do not control their economy. Almost all the economic activities are in the hands of non-Indigenous. And yet this people lived on a vast territory with plenty of resources. It was the cause of its drama.

One finds in Matimekosh all the characteristics of an alienated people which has lost or is losing its identity. The young people in particular do not know who they are. What future do they have, on the reserve or outside? One has the impression of being in a dead-end street. The noose is tightening around them. There are plans to resume the exploitation of iron by Chinese and German interests. But, as I was told, the Innus are not involved or consulted.

Treaties signed with other indigenous nations (Crees and Neskapis) for the construction of dams, without consultation with the Innus, had serious impacts on the Innu territory. In fact many treaties signed with First Peoples have been contested. The reasons given are that the signatories have been misinformed of the implications of these treaties or that these have simply not been respected.

- ***Discrimination and racism***

In various parts of the country, demonstrations, sometimes violent, opposing members of indigenous communities to other local communities or to governmental authorities, are taking place. There are numerous accounts of discrimination and racism against them. Inquiries and polls show that Canadians and Québécois are more sympathetic towards immigrants than towards First Peoples.

One of the root causes of this racism and of these conflicts is ignorance, the main source of all types of prejudices. This is the reason why I chose the subject of indigenous peoples as one of the priorities of my teaching at the university. It is important in my mind that young people, who are the decision-makers of tomorrow, be better informed of the situation of the First Peoples, the Indian Act, the various treaties between the governments of Canada and Québec, the functioning of and living conditions on the reserves as well their action at international level. Encounters between our various cultures must be encouraged. It is the best way to fight prejudices.

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES IN THE UNITED NATIONS

1. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (15-26 May, 2006) <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/>

Since 2004, I have been attending, as representative of UFER, the annual meeting of this United Nations Forum created in 2000 at the initiative of indigenous peoples. Its mandate is to provide advice on indigenous issues to the United Nations system through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is composed of 16 experts, eighth appointed by governments and eighth by indigenous organizations.

This fifth session, presided over by Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, expert from the Philippines (Igorot), dealt with the theme “**Millennium Development Goals and Indigenous Peoples**”. The opening ceremony was held, for the first time, in the General Assembly Hall in order to mark, among others, the beginning of the second International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People.

In the afternoon, the Foreign Minister of **Bolivia** – an Indian like the President – made an intervention which was warmly received by the participants. He said, among others, that “we must decide for ourselves what we want and how we want to live”.

During the debate, speakers focused on the need to redefine the Millennium Development Goals with special emphasis on full participation of indigenous people. Half- a- day was dedicated to **Africa**. Speakers spoke about the Pygmies, the Twas, the Mbuti, the San, etc. Vital Bambaze from Burundi, former UFER intern, made an intervention in the name of the Association “Let Us Unite for the Promotion of the Twas.”

The representative of the **International Labour Organization** (ILO) informed participants of a study carried out by her organization on the Baka communities in Cameroon, in order to assess their perception of poverty and reflect on how to make the Millenium Development Goals relevant to their needs. This study can be found on the ILO website: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/norm/egalite/itpp/publication/cameroun.pdf>

A special meeting was dedicated to the protection of traditional knowledge and cultural expressions. Very interesting interventions were made, in particular by the representative of the **World Intellectual Property Organization** (WIPO).

The theme of the next session will be “**territories, lands and natural resources**”. The experts made a proposal to hold this session at the United Nations Center in Bangkok, from 14 to 25 May 2007. ECOSOC will take a decision on this proposal at its resumed annual session in the fall.

2. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

For the last twenty years a draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Populations has been under discussion within human rights instances of the United Nations. These discussions involved mainly representatives of governments and of indigenous peoples. The particularity of this text is the fact that it deals with collective rights while the other human rights declarations and conventions are concerned with individual rights. This explains, in part, the length of the negotiations.

- ***Content of the Declaration***

This Declaration “cover a wide range of human rights and fundamental freedoms related to indigenous peoples, including the right to preserve and develop their cultural characteristics and distinct identities, ownership and use of traditional lands and natural resources, and protection against genocide. The draft Declaration also covers rights related to religion, language and education, and the right to participate in the political, economic and social life of the society in which indigenous peoples live. The draft Declaration recognizes the right to self-determination, to self-government in matters related to indigenous affairs and the honouring of treaties and agreements concluded with indigenous peoples”.⁵

- ***Stumbling block***

The right to self-determination and to the management of natural resources has been the stumbling block of the negotiations. Countries such as United States, Australia and New-Zealand objected till the end to the wordings of these articles. Hours of discussion were spent on these articles. At times the draft seemed to be doomed to failure. But each time someone restarted the negotiations.

- ***Adoption of the Declaration***

Finally, this year, at the first session of the newly created Human Rights Council (June 2006), the draft Declaration was adopted by 30 votes in favour, 2 against (Canada and the Russian Federation) and 12 abstentions. Three countries were absent. The Indigenous Peoples in Canada had hoped till the end that Canada would vote in favour of the draft, but the transition from a liberal government to a conservative one modified its position. Canada acted as the spokesperson for United States, Australia and New-Zealand which are not members of the Council.

The draft will be presented to the 61st session of the General Assembly this fall for approbation. It will be adopted without any doubt. This will be a victory – a bit bitter, however, if countries directly concerned reject the text. Even if not binding, this instrument remains nevertheless an important moral reference.

⁵ Leaflet No. 5: The draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, published by the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, website: <http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/guide.htm>

NEWS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP

- **Paul Beersmans**, member of UFER Board of Directors, has undertaken two study tours in *Jammu and Kashmir* (J & K) in 2006. In the course of the tours, Paul met with governmental and local authorities as well as representatives of civil society, including those providing humanitarian assistance to the populations. In the course of these tours, Paul travelled to various parts of the territory and met with governmental and local authorities as well as with representatives of civil society, including those providing humanitarian assistance to populations. Here are some conclusions of his second trip in August/September 2006.
 1. The first priority must be given to stop the sufferings of the Kashmiris. This can only be realised by stopping violence.
 2. Everyone agrees there is no other way but to continue the peace process.
 3. A dialogue is necessary on three levels:
 - a) bilateral level: between India and Pakistan;
 - b) national level: between the Government of India, the J&K State Government and other representatives of the Kashmiris;
 - c) internal level: between the different regions of J&K.

For more information, you can consult the website of the Belgian Association for Solidarity with Jammu and Kashmir (BASJAK): <http://www.basjak.org>

- **Lieke Coenegrachts**, a Belgian working in Cambodia, has set up a pre-schools program for intercultural education aiming at bringing together children of Khmer and Vietnamese origin so that they can learn to live together in harmony. **AN Myong-Ja (Agatha)**, from Korea, who performed such an efficient work as a volunteer during the training program in Korea in 2004, goes each year to Cambodia to collaborate in the training of teachers. (See attached leaflet)
- Human trafficking is a worldwide problem, due to poverty and globalization. Women as well as young girls and boys are cheated by men and women who want to become rich by buying and selling them as commodities. The **Grail** encourages its members to join, in their country, a group of women or other organizations active in combating trafficking. A network of persons active in this field has been set up within the Grail. The coordinator of this network is **Ton Brouwer** from the Netherlands: ajm.brouwer@hccnet.nl.

WHAT CAN WE DO AGAINST GLOBAL WARMING



We know that our way of living has an impact on global warming. Through their **consumer pattern**, the inhabitants of “rich countries” produce more CO₂ than those from “poor countries” (up to hundred times!). If the latter were to reach the same level of consumption as the former, the planet would not be able to produce enough to meet the demand and could even implode.

Members of the Grail, one of the founding associations of UFER, reflected on concrete actions to reduce the consumption of the earth's resources. They produced a small document entitled *How large is your footprint? – An ecological exercise for Grail members*.

A “footprint” means, here, how much productive land and water a person needs to support what she or he uses or discards. If you want to know how large is your footprint, which means the impact of your life style has on nature, if you have access to Internet, go the following website and do the **small test** proposed. *You will be surprised and maybe even shocked:* <http://ecofoot.org/>

The members of the Grail suggest a process of **environmental conscientization**, for those who wish to contribute to the survival of life in all its wonderfully varied forms on earth. This implies that we **reflect** on our use of the earth's resources, that we take what **action** is possible and feasible, and that we do what we can **to make others aware** of both the problems and the possible solutions regarding our footprints. For example:

- **Travel:**
 - ✓ Limit the number of journeys by car
- **Electricity:** *Our homes produce more greenhouse gasses, on average, than our cars, because fossil fuel is often used to generate electricity*
 - ✓ Use low-energy light bulbs
 - ✓ Turn the thermostat down one or two degrees
 - ✓ Wash our laundry warm and rinse cold
- **Waste:**
 - ✓ Recycle as much as possible
 - ✓ Reduce the use of plastic bags and pre-packed products
- **Food:**
 - Eat more freshly produced food and less processed food
 - Eat less meat

These are only a few ideas in order to start doing something to reduce the production of greenhouse gasses. If **you have any ideas to share on this issue, please send them to:** raymonde.martineau@sympatico.ca

❖ REFERENCES

- <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/>
- <http://www.eartheasy.com/>