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FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Media Statement

For Immediate Release
June 29, 2007

First Nations Leadership Council statement regarding the 1st anniversary of the UN Human Rights Council adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver – One year ago today the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. To Canada's shame, it, together with Russia, voted against the adoption of the Declaration. Since then, Canada has been actively engaged through the UN process to continue to undermine the resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council. While Canada is taking some measures to address human rights issues domestically, it is still working hard to undermine the Declaration at the United Nations. If Canada is truly serious about its dealings with Indigenous Peoples, it would support the Declaration as it was adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on June 29, 2006.

Canada, in letters from the Hon. Jim Prentice, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, has said that unless changes are made to the Declaration it will vote against the adoption of the Declaration. Canada's approach to human rights issues is being severely tarnished by this position and actions of the federal government.

The Declaration provides minimum INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS for the protection of the "dignity, well being and the survival" of the world's 370 million Indigenous Peoples. It is clear the current domestic/Canadian standards are unilateral, arbitrary and self serving. Canada's comprehensive claims policies, self government policies and specific claims policies are all products of Canada's unilateral and arbitrary standard setting.

For example, Canada does not like the articles in the Declaration which refer to

- lands, territories and resources
- compensation for lands that have been taken/lost/stolen
- "free prior and informed consent" of Indigenous peoples when governments plan to develop lands/territories in Indigenous territories

One only need ask any First Nations negotiator to confirm that Canada continues to put forth a policy of not providing compensation to Indigenous peoples for lands and resources taken without Indigenous free, prior and informed consent.

Canada wants to determine First Nations peoples' human rights in light of self-serving policies. In fact as evidence of this, just a few days ago Canada voted against a resolution at the Human Rights Council in Geneva which requires States (i.e., Canada) to be subjected to periodic UN reviews of its human rights record. Canada was the only country to vote against this resolution.

After several days of "consultations" with States and Indigenous Caucus and a large number of non-Indigenous non-governmental organizations, the UN will convene a plenary session today in New York to discuss/debate the Declaration. Grand Chief Edward John, a member of the First Nations Summit Executive and the First Nations Leadership Council is currently at the United Nations on behalf of the Assembly of First Nations and the North American Indigenous Caucus to observe the discussions. The Assembly of First Nations represents 633 First Nations in Canada.

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the BC Assembly of First Nations. The Council works together to politically represent the interests of First Nations in British Columbia and develop strategies and actions to bring about significant and substantive changes to government policy that will benefit all First Nations in British Columbia.

For more information:

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