

Guidance to the Interagency Group on Insular Areas
US Position on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
March 1, 2011

Background. On December 16, 2010, President Obama announced United States support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Quoting the President in pertinent part:

I want to be clear: What matters far more than words -- what matters far more than any resolution or declaration -- are actions to match those words...that's the standard I expect my administration to be held to.

The Declaration expresses both the aspirations of indigenous peoples around the world and those of States in seeking to improve their relations with indigenous peoples. Most importantly, it expresses aspirations of the United States, aspirations that this country seeks to achieve within the structure of the U.S. Constitution, laws, and international obligations, while also seeking, where appropriate, to improve our laws and policies.

The President's announcement of support for the Declaration followed a thorough, interagency review of the U.S. position that included input from Insular Affairs, reported by Interior Secretary Salazar.

Next Steps. The Administration has released a detailed, written statement regarding U.S. support for the Declaration. That document – titled “Announcement of U.S. Support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – Initiatives to Promote the Government-to-Government Relationship & Improve the Lives of Indigenous Peoples” – explains U.S. support for the Declaration and describes recent Federal government work. The full text of the statement can be found at:

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/153223.pdf>.

The 15-Page Explanation carefully articulates U.S. support for the Declaration.

The United States aspires to improve relations with indigenous peoples by looking to the principles embodied in the Declaration in its dealings with federally recognized tribes, while also working, as appropriate, with all indigenous individuals and communities in the United States.