



HOLY SEE APPEALS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Promotes Intercultural Dialogue, Not Domination

NEW YORK, OCT. 19, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The Holy See is urging the United Nations to confront human rights violations in indigenous populations by teaching the people of their inherent dignity.

Archbishop Celestino Migliore, permanent observer of the Holy See at the United Nations, affirmed this today in an address before the 64th session of the U.N. General Assembly.

For the Holy See, he said, speaking about this issue is "more than an intellectual exercise, for it comes from its long-standing commitment to addressing the social, personal and spiritual needs of the world's more than 370 million indigenous people."

The prelate underlined the need to respect the "identity and culture of indigenous populations."

"Understanding and respecting their cultural traditions, religious consciousness and their long-standing ability to decide and control their development programs foster better interaction and cooperation between peoples and governments," he added.

The archbishop noted, however that "human rights violations continue" among indigenous peoples.

He continued: "My delegation would like to recall the conviction so often resounding in this hall that the recognition of the fundamental dignity of every person and promotion of human rights remain the most effective strategy for their comprehensive development.

"We have to work harder to make indigenous peoples aware of their own human dignity and

empower their communities to shape their life according to their own traditions."

Access to resources

Archbishop Migliore affirmed, "In the midst of social and economic change, traditional networks of solidarity have more to do; promotion of indigenous initiatives to defend their rights must therefore be honored."

He added, "Interaction between cultures has a positive value, but it should be effected through intercultural dialogue not by domination or subjugation."

The prelate called for greater access to agricultural technology for these peoples, as well as special attention to health education regarding epidemics such as HIV/AIDS.

He also underlined the need to "cultivate a public conscience that recognizes food and access to water as universal rights of all human beings, without distinction or discrimination."

"Indigenous communities are deeply rooted in cultures, traditions and practices of respect for Earth, creation and human life," the archbishop acknowledged.

He continued, "Openness to life has long been at the centre of the indigenous people's spirituality."

"If personal and social sensitivity towards the acceptance of new life is lost," Archbishop Migliore warned, "then other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society also wither away."

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