



MEDIA RELEASE / Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers

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**Observing International Day of the World's Indigenous People
with a call for endorsement of UN Declaration**

In celebrating the International Day of the World's Indigenous People this Sunday - 9 August 2009 - the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) has renewed its call for the current Government to endorse the UN's non-binding Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

"When we wrote to Prime Minister John Key and other Ministers in June about this issue, we were encouraged to receive a reply from the office of the Hon. Simon Power, Minister of Justice, that we would receive a further reply about the Government's intentions as soon as possible," says Rose Henderson, ANZASW President.

"The adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly in 2007 was a landmark in the struggle of indigenous peoples for justice, equal rights and development. Our members - who now number almost 4,000 professionals engaged in social work - have been dismayed that New Zealand has not moved more quickly to follow in Australia's footsteps earlier this year to endorse the Declaration".

"On 11-13 November this year, ANZASW will be welcoming social workers from throughout the Asia Pacific region to the Asia Pacific Social Work Conference in Auckland - the first international social work conference of this scale to be hosted in New Zealand since 1995. New Zealand's stance on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will be a topic for discussion at that event, and we are hopeful that we will be in a position by then to provide a positive statement of New Zealand's support for the Declaration," says Rose Henderson.

Background

In his official statement to mark this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous People, Ban Ki-Moon, the UN Secretary-General notes that the world's indigenous peoples - 370 million in 70 countries - remain some of the most marginalized populations, adding that "insufficient progress in health, in particular, points to a persistent and profound gap in many countries between the formal recognition of indigenous peoples' rights and the actual situation on the ground". The International Day of the World's Indigenous People will be observed at UN Headquarters in New York on Monday 10 August at an event organized by the Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in cooperation with the NGO Committee on the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples and the New York office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The theme of the observance at UN Headquarters will be indigenous peoples and HIV/AIDS.

In recent years observance of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People has focused on reconciliation between States and indigenous peoples, the urgent need to preserve indigenous languages and the theme "Partnership for Action and Dignity". See also www.un.org/en/events/indigenous/2009

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For more information about the Asia Pacific Social Work Conference see www.swinnz2009.co.nz