USING THE SYSTEM - An Information Set for Indigenous Peoples on the Operations and Procedures of the United Nations

How to use this information set

Key Words and Ideas	
Human rights	**The United Nations**
Development	**Specialized agencies**

The United Nations and Indigenous Peoples

This information set is designed to provide indigenous peoples with practical information on the operations and procedures of the **United Nations** (UN) and its various agencies related to **human rights** and **development**.

While indigenous peoples have endured centuries of oppression and continue to face many difficulties, the rights of indigenous peoples have increasingly been recognized at the international level. This can be attributed to two main developments. First, indigenous peoples have successfully brought their concerns to the attention of governments and the international community and have demanded action. Second, many people have recognized the continued violation of indigenous peoples' rights and called for action to redress the inequalities experienced by indigenous peoples. Around the world, there is a growing awareness of the importance of cultural diversity and indigenous peoples' contributions to the development of modern society.

Nearly all UN organizations and **specialized agencies** are now concerned with the rights of indigenous peoples and their participation in development activities. This information set outlines the way in which these organizations and agencies are working to improve the situation of indigenous peoples around the world and discusses how indigenous peoples can participate in such activities.

Finding your way around this information set

The information set is divided into different leaflets, each focusing on a particular topic, so you can explore specific issues of concern to you. The first part of this set provides background information on human rights within the UN system. The second part outlines how the UN system is addressing issues of major concern to indigenous peoples, including human rights, the environment, development, health and education.

If, for example, you are looking for information on how to make a complaint to the UN under one of the major international human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, you can refer to Leaflet no 4. If you are looking for information on how to contribute to the UN's consideration of developments related to biological diversity, you can refer to Leaflet no 10. Even if you want to focus on one issue, it is recommended that you read all the leaflets to see how your area of special interest fits in to the overall picture of human rights within the UN system.

Leaflet summaries

Each leaflet begins with a summary of its content.

Key words and ideas

There are many phrases and terms that are specific to the work of the United Nations, particularly in the field of international human rights.   It is important that you are familiar with the language used in the UN system. Key words and ideas are introduced at the beginning of each leaflet. The text of each leaflet explains their meaning. Key words are printed in **bold** the first time they appear in the text.

Abbreviations and acronyms

You will also notice that there are many abbreviations and acronyms used in the UN system. The manual generally uses the full name, followed by its abbreviation or acronym in brackets, the first time a name is used. Thereafter, only the abbreviation is used. As abbreviations and acronyms are used frequently in the United Nations, it is important to be familiar with them.

Further assistance

This information set is only an introduction to the operations and procedures of the UN and its various organizations and specialized agencies. Further assistance from experts may be needed to get the maximum benefit from the information provided. The information set suggests where you can find such assistance and provides Internet addresses where possible. It is important to contact organizations and specialized agencies regularly to keep yourself informed about new developments, programmes and projects.