



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**United Nations CERD hear concerns about Indigenous
Sacred Sites and the lack of protect**

ST. MICHAELS, NAVAJO NATION - The Navajo Nation sent a delegation to attend the United States review and treaty obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). The delegation includes Interim Chief of Staff Leonard Gorman and Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission Policy Analyst Rodney L. Tahe.

The Human Rights Commission has been working with other Indigenous nations to preserve and protect sacred sites within the United States. The work of the Human Rights Commission is directed by the Navajo Nation Council and Naa' bik'iyati' Committee "to do all things necessary to protect and advocate for the human rights of the Navajo people" (NABIS-58-11), especially as it relates to the San Francisco Peaks (Resolution IGRMY-92-10).

December 2009, the Navajo Nation Intergovernmental Relation Committee authorized the Human Rights Commission to investigate and study any human rights violation on the desecration and protection of sacred sites near the Navajo Nation. In July 2012, the Human Rights Commission adopted and approved the Sacred Sites Report.

According to the Sacred Sites Report "the Commission discovered that the Navajo People often come into disagreements and conflicts with non-Indian entities, including the federal government, corporations, business and private developers over places that they consider sacred." This includes the sacred mountains surrounding the Navajo Nation.

With the adaptation and support of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) by the U.S., the Human Rights Commission started advocating that the federal laws and policies on Indigenous sacred sites be reflective of that in UNDRIP.

During the U.S. review by CERD, the Navajo Nation delegation demonstrated to CERD that current federal laws and policies on Indigenous sacred sites do not adequately protect or preserve sacred sites, even after the two listening session held by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service and U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs to re-examine their policies.

The U.S. was reviewed by CERD on Wednesday, August 13th and Thursday, August 14th. The U.S. delegation included Keith M. Harper, Ambassador to the U.N. Human Rights Council; Lawrence S. Roberts, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the DOI BIA; and Eric Bruce Wilson, International Affairs Coordinator of the DOI BIA.

For more information about the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission efforts on sacred sites and our international efforts contact the Human Rights Commission at (928) 871-7436.

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