



THE NAVAJO NATION

Navajo Nation Council
United Nations Human Rights Council
Geneva, Switzerland

March 12, 2014

Ya'at'eeh,

My name is Dwight Witherspoon, elected official of the Navajo Nation. The Hon. Elmer P. Begay, Navajo Nation Council Delegate, and the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission accompany me. The Navajo Nation delegation is advocating for the implementation of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples within the United States. One of the critical issues is the accessibility to the United Nations bodies.

The Navajo Nation is an indigenous nation – equivalent to the nation-states that are member of the United Nations – that has lands, territories, and resources, and exercises self-determination. As an indigenous nation, the Navajo Nation is not a non-government organization and must participate in the United Nations meetings on its own credentials, not as an NGO. As an example, Navajo Nation wanted to participate in the U.N. Human Rights Council meeting to submit an intervention. However, we were prevented from entering the meeting room because of status as a indigenous nation; not being a NGO.

Therefore, the Navajo Nation advocates for providing a meaningful and effective mechanism that permits indigenous nations to participate in the United Nations meetings. At the minimum, the Navajo Nation must be afforded permanent observer status.