

NATIONS UNIES  
HAUT COMMISSARIAT AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME



UNITED NATIONS  
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Téléfax: (41-22)-917 9022  
Télégrammes: UNATIONS, GENEVE  
Téléc: 41 29 62  
Téléphone: (41-22)-917 9309  
Internet: www.ohchr.org  
E-mail: nprouvez@ohchr.org



Address:  
Palais des Nations  
CH-1211 GENEVE 10

REFERENCE: NP/JF

9 March 2007

Excellency,

Recalling that Belize ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination on 14 November 2001, I write to inform you that in the course of its 70<sup>th</sup> session, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination considered on a preliminary basis under its early warning and urgent action procedures information regarding the situation of the Maya people and their land claims sent by the University of Arizona Indigenous Peoples Law and Policy Program and the Maya Leaders Alliance, a non-governmental organization that represents the Mopan and Q'eqchi' Maya people of the Toledo District of southern Belize.

According to this information, the Maya people of Belize suffer from a persistent pattern of racial discrimination, and Mayan subsistence, culture and way of life may suffer irreparable harm. In particular, the Committee is preoccupied by reports regarding privatization and leasing of land without the prior consultation or consent of the Maya people, as well as the granting of concessions for oil development, logging and the production of hydro-electricity.

In view of the fact that the problems faced by the Maya people seem to call for immediate attention, and referring to its general recommendation 23 of 18 August 1997 on the rights of indigenous peoples (see attached), the Committee requests the State party to submit replies to the following questions as a matter of urgency and no later than **1 July 2007**:

H.E. Mr. Stewart Warren Leslie  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
Permanent Representative  
Permanent Mission of Belize to the United Nations  
675 Third Avenue, Suite 1911,  
New York, NY 10017, USA  
Sent by fax: 001 212 593 0932

1. Please provide the Committee with any information which may assist to have a full understanding of the factual situation concerning the Maya people and their land claims.
2. In particular, please provide information regarding the Maya land claim, which was never resolved in the Supreme Court of Belize, as well as information on actions undertaken by the State party pursuant to the recommendations included in the final report adopted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 2004;
3. Please provide information on measures taken by the State party to consult and seek consent of the Maya people in decisions affecting them and their land;
4. Please provide information on the current situation regarding the process of leasing and of issuing oil development, logging, and hydro-electric concessions on Maya traditional lands.

The above-mentioned issues pertaining to the land rights of Maya People will be considered by the Committee at its 71<sup>st</sup> session (30 July- 17 August 2007) under its early warning and urgent action procedures in the light of the replies of the State party as well as any additional information received from civil society organizations.

Furthermore, I take this opportunity to draw your attention to the fact that, in accordance with article 9, paragraph 1 of the Convention, Belize was due to submit its initial report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination one year after the entry into force of the Convention for the State party, and subsequent periodic reports at two-year intervals. Consequently, the initial, second and third periodic reports of Belize, due respectively on 14 December 2002, 2004 and 2006, which have not yet been submitted, are overdue.

Notwithstanding the submission by Your Excellency's Government of a detailed response to the specific questions raised above, the Committee strongly encourages Belize to submit as soon as possible its overdue initial to third periodic reports in a single document. This report should contain detailed information on the whole implementation of the Convention by the State party and be in conformity with the reporting guidelines adopted by the Committee (CERD/C/70/Rev.5, to be sent separately by the Secretariat).

I wish to inform you that in case of non-receipt of the overdue report by **31 December 2007**, the Committee will proceed with the full review of the implementation of the Convention in Belize and adopt concluding observations in light of information received from other sources at its 72<sup>nd</sup> session, to be held in Spring 2008.

Rest assured, Excellency, that the Committee is looking forward to initiating a constructive dialogue with the Government of Belize, with a view to providing it with assistance in its efforts to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention.

Yours sincerely,



Régis de GOUTTES  
Chairman of the Committee for the  
Elimination of Racial Discrimination