

MEDIA STATEMENT

7 January 2011

UN expert praises new Congolese law on indigenous peoples

The following statement was made by the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, James Anaya

GENEVA – “I commend the Republic of Congo for its adoption of a law on indigenous peoples on 30 December 2010. This marks a significant step in recognizing and protecting the rights of marginalized indigenous peoples of the country, including groups such as the Baaka, Mbendjele, Mikaya, Luma, Gyeli, Twa and Babongo, which collectively have been known as Pygmies. This law is the first of its kind on the African Continent, and it provides an important example of a good practice in the region for the recognition and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples.

“I expect that the President will promulgate the law and that the necessary implementing legislation will be adopted soon. Effective implementation of the law will require a strong and concerted effort by government authorities at all levels, especially in light of the extreme circumstances of disadvantage that indigenous peoples in Congo still face. I urge the Government to ensure that the law is implemented in accordance with relevant provisions of international human rights instruments, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I look forward to providing further observations and recommendations on operationalization of the law on indigenous peoples in my report on the situation of indigenous peoples in Congo, to be released later this year.” *

** Professor Anaya paid an 11-day visit to the Congo in November 2010.*

On 26 March 2008, the United Nations Human Rights Council appointed Professor S. James Anaya as Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, for an initial period of three years. Professor Anaya is a Regents Professor and the James J. Lenoir Professor of Human Rights Law and Policy at the University of Arizona (USA).

Learn more about the mandate and work of the Special Rapporteur:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/rapporteur/>

OHCHR Country Page – CDR Congo:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/countries/AsiaRegion/Pages/ZRIndex.aspx>

*For more information and **press inquiries**, please contact Lydie Ventre: lventre@ohchr.org*