Closing Remarks

THERE'S ABOUT A HALF HOUR. I WANT TO RECOGNIZE FROM THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE. KAREN BEGAY, SPECIAL ADVISOR. NAVAJO, AND WORKS WITH THE PRESIDENT.
I'M GOING TO TURN IT OVER TO JIM FOR CONCLUDING REMARKS.

JAMES ANAYA: THANK YOU. AGAIN, THANK YOU FOR YOUR IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DISCUSSION. FOR TAKING THE TIME TO BE HERE, SHARING YOUR THOUGHTS, STORIES, AND ASPIRATIONS.

OF COURSE, I WANT TO REITERATE MY THANKS TO THE ORGANIZERS, MY INSTITUTION, THE UNIVERSITY, THE IPLP PROGRAM. THE INDIVIDUALS WHO GAVE THEIR TIME AND EFFORT TO THE SUCCESS OF THIS MEETING. AND ALSO TO THE OUR COSPONSORS. OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER OF HUMAN RIGHTS. NAVAJO NATION HUMAN RIGHTS, NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS, AND THE TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION. AND -- N. C. AI. AND FORD FOUNDATION. FOR IT'S GENEROUS SUPPORT FOR THIS MEETING.

I CAN'T REALLY SAY HOW DEEPLY MOVED I AM BY WHAT I HAVE HEARD. EVEN THOUGH IT'S BEEN FROM MULTIPLE VIEWS, AND OFTEN WITHOUT SENDING THE SAME MESSAGE OR IDENTICAL POINT OF VIEW.

NONETHELESS WHAT I THINK IS IMPORTANT IS WHAT WE HAVE HAD HERE IS A CONVERSATION, A CONVERSATION AROUND CERTAIN CONSTANTS, VALUES THAT WE HAVE HEARD REPEATED AGAIN AND AGAIN.

THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THOSE RIGHTS, THAT EVERYBODY HAS EXPRESSED IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.

RIGHTS BEGINNING WITH OR CENTERED ON THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION. WE HEARD THAT EXPRESSED IN MANY WAYS. IN CONNECTION WITH THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE AND RELATIONSHIP THAT HAS TO THE EXISTENCE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE. AND SPIRITUAL, AND HOW IT CONNECTS WITH ALL ASPECTS OF INDIGENOUS LIVES.

ALONG WITH THE DISCUSSION OF RIGHTS, AS A CONSTANT IN THIS CONVERSATION, THERE'S A REPEATED CALL TO REMEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES. AND THAT'S IMPORTANT. TO UNDERSTAND WITH THE RIGHTS COME RESPONSIBILITIES ON THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE, INCLUDED PARTS OF INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENTS AND ON THE PART OF EACH OF US, EACH HUMAN BEING, MEMBER OF COMMUNITIES.

SO WITH THIS CONVERSATION I THINK WE SEE THAT THERE ARE THESE CONSTANTS ALONGSIDE THESE DIFFERENT VIEWS WHICH ARE NATURAL, GIVEN THE DIVERSITY IN THE ROOM, AND IN THIS COUNTRY, AND ACROSS THE GLOBE. THIS CONVERSATION IS ONE THAT'S BEEN GOING ON FOR A LONG TIME. IN MANY WAYS, IT HAS NOT BEEN HEARD BY THE WORLD AS IT SHOULD.

MY HOPE IS THIS CONVERSATION WILL CONTINUE TO GROW AND EXPAND TO INCLUDE GOVERNMENTS OF STATES, THAT IS NATION-STATES, INCLUDING THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES, IN A MORE MEANINGFUL SENSE THAT IT HAS EXPANDED TO INCLUDE THE GOVERNMENTS. IT WILL EXTEND TO INCLUDE THE LARGER SOCIETY OF THE GOVERNMENTS OR STATES WITHIN WHICH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE LIVE. AND THAT

EXTENDS SUCH THAT THE VALUES THAT WE SHARE, THAT WE HEAR, ARE ABOUT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES. CAN EVENTUALLY TRANSLATE INTO THE REALITY DAY-TO-DAY LIFE. THE DECLARATION AFFIRMS RIGHTS.

AND -- THAT'S THE CONVERSATION, AROUND WHICH THE DECLARATION HAS HIGHLIGHTED. THE AFFIRMATION OF THESE RIGHTS, THE CONSTANT I REFERRED TO. THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE (INAUDIBLE), BUT THE DENIAL OF THE RIGHTS. THE ONGOING GAP.

WE'VE HEARD STORIES ABOUT THE GAP, ABOUT THE ONGOING DENIAL OF RIGHTS. MOVING STORIES, BUT STILL STORIES OF HOPE. IN EACH CASE, IT'S THE HOPE FOR THE CLOSING OF THE GAP, MOVEMENT TOWARD A REALITY WHERE THE RIGHTS ARE MORE THAN JUST EXPRESSIONS ON PAPER. MORE THAN LOFTY STATEMENTS MADE IN THE HALLS OF THE UNITED NATIONS OR GOVERNMENT BUT THAT TRANSLATE INTO REALITY.

IN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE. WHEN I FIRST THOUGHT ABOUT A VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES, IT WAS AROUND THE EFFORT TO GET THE US TO ENDORSE OR SUPPORT THE DECLARATION AT A TIME WHEN IT WAS NOT SUPPORTING IT AND VOTED AGAINST IT.

I BECAME RAPPORTEUR IN 2008. IT WAS A FEW MONTHS AFTER THE DECLARATION WAS ADOPTED, SEPTEMBER 13. I REMEMBER THAT DAY. SITTING IN THE HALLS WHEN THE VOTING BOARD FLASHED ON THE SCREEN IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL, WITH THE AFFIRMATIVE VOTES. IT WAS MOVING. AND WE PASSED FROM A TIME WHERE THE

AFFIRMATION OF RIGHTS WAS A DREAM TO A TIME WHEN IT WAS A REALITY.
IT WAS LITERALLY AN INSTANT.

AND I MUST SAY UP UNTIL THE MOMENT THOSE OF US IN THE ROOM STILL HAD OUR DOUBTS. WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE AFFIRMATIVE. BECAUSE OF THE DIFFICULTIES, ESPECIALLY IN THE MONTHS, THE LATTER YEARS, WE PASSED FROM THE MOMENT WHERE THE DECLARATION WAS A REALITY. IT WAS EXTREMELY MOVING. BUT STILL A HUGE DISAPPOINTMENT. A FEW COUNTRIES, STATES, HAD VOTED AGAINST THE DECLARATION. FOUR. ONLY FOUR. FOUR SIGNIFICANT ONES. UNITED STATES, AMONG THEM.

IT WAS PART OF MY HOPE AS I BECAME UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR, THAT SOMEONE COULD -- TO SEE IT EVENTUALLY CHANGE. ONE BY ONE. THE GOVERNMENTS REVERSED POSITIONS. IT WAS BECAUSE THAT CONVERSATION TOWARDS THE ADOPTION WAS CONTINUED AND THE CONVERSATION THAT HAD TAKEN STATES TO A POSITION OF RELUCTANCE. TO ACCEPT IS TO AFFIRM IT. THAT CONVERSATION WAS CONTINUING WITH THOSE GOVERNMENTS THAT STILL VOTED AGAINST THE DECLARATION AND ESSENTIALLY MOVED THEM. THERE WAS POLITICAL CHANGES THAT FIGURED IN THE MIX. BUT THOSE GOVERNMENTS WERE MOVED TOWARD ENDORSEMENT OF THE DECLARATION.

WE CAN LAMENT THAT EACH CAME WITH SOME QUALIFICATION. NONETHELESS, THOSE QUALIFICATIONS WERE THE SAME NATURE OF EXPLANATIONS OF VOTES BY OTHER GOVERNMENT. THE MAIN POINT WAS, THEY SUPPORTED IN PRINCIPLE. AND

AFFIRMED THE CORE PRINCIPLES IN THE DECLARATION INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION, CULTURE, EDUCATION, ALL THE RIGHTS WE HAVE DISCOVERED.

THAT WAS THE MAIN POINT. I WAS INVOLVED IN DISCUSSION WITH THE GOVERNMENT TO TRY TO ADDRESS THE CONCERNS, TO SEE IF THERE COULD BE A REVERSAL OF THE POSITION. I WAS A SMALL PART OF THE EFFORT. INDIGENOUS LEADERS IN THE COUNTRY, ORGANIZATIONS, LIKE INTERNATIONAL TREATY COUNCIL WERE AT THE FOREFRONT TO SEE THE GOVERNMENT REVERSED IT'S POSITION. AND THAT EVENTUALLY HAPPENED.

AND SO THE NEXT SET OF CONVERSATIONS I HAD. WHAT ABOUT SOMETHING IN THE UNITED STATES WHERE WE CAN PURSUE A CONVERSATION ABOUT IMPLEMENTING IT? WHAT IT WOULD MEAN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. INITIALLY I DIDN'T GET MUCH RESPONSE. IT TOOK A FEW MONTHS BEFORE THE DISCUSSION LED TO THE IDEA OF A VISIT. WE DISCUSSED THE VISIT IN MORE THAN SIMPLY A SET OF DISCUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON ABOUT THE DECLARATION, TO A FULL COUNTRY VISIT OF THE KIND I DO AS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR TO ASSESS THE CONDITION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE. THIS VISIT FEATURES THE DECLARATION. AND BECAUSE IT'S A RELATIVELY NEW INSTRUMENT

IN THE LIFE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND IN THE LIFE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY. IT'S RELATIVELY NEW, AND FRANKLY NOT THAT WELL KNOWN THROUGHOUT. AND I WANT TO SEE, AND HOPE WE ALL DO, THAT CHANGE. TO SEE THE DECLARATION BECOME BETTER UNDERSTOOD AND THIS CONFERENCE GOES A

LONG WAY.

IT'S ALSO AN INSTRUMENT NOT WELL KNOWN WITHIN GOVERNMENT. WE CAN TALK ABOUT THE PRESIDENT ENDORSING IT BUT ITS ONE THING FOR HIM TO DO THAT BUT ANOTHER TO MAKE IT'S WAY DOWN TO THE OPERATIONAL ASPECTS. IT'S COMPLEX AND MULTIFACETED.

SO THE CONVERSATION AROUND THE DECLARATION WHICH WE HAVE HERE. LIKE I SAID, I'M HOPING IT WILL CONTINUE TO GROW. INCLUDE MORE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE. EMBRACE THE GOVERNMENT. BUT THE VARIOUS OPERATIONAL LEVELS.
TO EMBRACE THE COURTS. I THINK SOMEONE CALLED THEM "THE SUITS", THE LAWYERS WILL START TO ENGAGE, AND, WE TRY TO ORIENT OUR STUDENTS STUDYING FEDERAL INDIAN LAW, NOT JUST HUMAN RIGHTS, FULLY INTEND TO STAY IN THE COUNTRY, WORKING WITH TRIBES, REPRESENTING THEM BEFORE THE COURTS.
WE TALK ABOUT HOW TO INCORPORATE THE DECLARATION AND OTHER RIGHTS IN THEIR ADVOCACY. SO THEY DON'T BECOME A SUIT. THAT YOU HAVE TO ORIENT WITH REGARD TO THE RELEVANCE. AND HOPEFULLY THAT WILL OCCUR. MORE AND MORE.

SO, JUST TO CONCLUDE. WE ARE NOT ANYWHERE NEAR THE END OF THE CONVERSATION. THIS IS JUST A SMALL PART. MY WORK AS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR IS A CONTRIBUTION. I HOPE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF MY WORK TO CATALYZE THE CONVERSATION A BIT. AND OF COURSE, IT SHOULD INCLUDE NOT JUST THE DECLARATION, BUT NOT THE ONLY AFFIRMATION OF RIGHTS THAT RELATE TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLE.

THERE'S SEVERAL OTHERS MENTIONED IN THE DISCUSSIONS. HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES TO WHICH THE UNITED STATES IS A PARTY. INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS.

VERY IMPORTANT. THAT GROUNDED PRINCIPLES IN THE DECLARATION. THE PRINCIPLES OF SELF-DETERMINATION. EQUALITY -- SO MY HOPE IS THAT THIS WORK WILL HELP TO CATALYZE THIS CONVERSATION. AND THAT THAT CONVERSATION WILL MOVE TO ACTION AS WE HAVE TALKED ABOUT. CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN THE EXPRESSION OF THE RIGHTS AND REALIZATION ON THE GROUND.

AS YOU KNOW, THIS MANDATE IS ONE ESTABLISHED BY THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL. IT'S AN ENTITY MADE UP OF GOVERNMENTS. STATES. OF MEMBER STATES. FORTY-SEVEN OF THEM. AND THE COUNCIL, THIS COUNCIL, WHICH INCLUDES THE UNITED STATES HAS ESTABLISHED DIFFERENT SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS, INCLUDING ONE OF RACISM. ONE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. ONE ON FOOD. ONE ON RIGHT TO HOUSING. AND ONE ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE. EACH OF THESE SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS HAS A FUNCTION TRYING TO CATALYZE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS IN OUR RESPECTIVE AREAS OF CONCERN. AND WE HAVE THE MANDATE TO DO IT FROM THE GOVERNMENTS THEMSELVES.

SOMETIMES WE ARE LOOKED AT WITH SUSPICION. WE ARE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNMENTS THAT WE THEN IN A SENSE INVESTIGATE, EVALUATE. WE ARE APPOINTED AS INDEPENDENT EXPERTS. AND THAT'S EXPLICIT. I'M NOT TO TAKE INSTRUCTIONS FROM ANY GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES. OR MAYBE ESPECIALLY.

I'M TO DO MY WORK ON AN INDEPENDENT BASIS. NOT ONLY CAN I DO IT, I'M SUPPOSED TO DO IT AND THAT MEANS LISTENING TO YOU WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT LIKE IT OR NOT. WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT WHAT I MIGHT SAY SITS WELL OR NOT. IT'S ABOUT TELLING THE TRUTH.
IT'S ABOUT TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED. WHAT'S HAPPENING, AND ABOUT WHAT YOU THE PEOPLE ASPIRE TO HAPPEN.

AND THEN ON THAT BASIS TO GIVE MY EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH WILL NECESSARILY BE INSPIRED BY DISCUSSIONS LIKE THESE. I DO FEEL IT IS A TREMENDOUS RESPONSIBILITY. I TAKE IT TO HEART, THE EXPRESSIONS I HAVE HEARD ABOUT THE EXPECTATIONS FOR THIS WORK, I CAN ONLY SAY, I AND THOSE WHO ARE DEDICATED WORK WITH ME. AND PLEDGE OUR UTMOST TO DO WHAT WE CAN. MOVE THINGS ALONG TOWARDS THE REALIZATION OF RIGHTS. HELP CLOSE THE GAP.
TO TAKE US FROM THE CONDITION OF VIOLATION OF RIGHTS TO REALIZATION OF RIGHTS.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH TO THE ELDERS, GRANDMOTHERS. TO THE O'ODHAM PEOPLE. WE HAD A MEETING, AND TO ALL THAT SHARED THIS TIME. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

ROBERT WILLIAMS: WE'RE GOING TO FINISH ON TIME. YOU HAVE BEEN WELL-BEHAVED. MY STUDENTS CAME UP AND SAID, EVERYBODY'S BEEN SO NICE. I WANT TO THANK THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR, GIVING US THE OPPORTUNITY TO HOST THIS PHENOMENAL EVENT.

I WANT TO THANK MAIA FROM THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER.

I WANT TO THANK THE PANELISTS, PEOPLE LIKE SUZAN, AND SOME OF THE OTHER PANELISTS WHO ARE BUSY, TO COME AND SHARE WITH US. THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS WERE SO WONDERFUL AND SO IMPORTANT. AND I WOULD LIKE FOR ALL OF YOU TO THANK THE CONFERENCE COORDINATOR. SEANNA HOWARD.

AND OUR VOLUNTEERS, THE STUDENTS, JULIE, GIVE THEM A HAND AS WELL.

I'VE ASKED MY FRIEND, DENNIS MANUEL IN TOHONO O'ODHAM, HE IS TOHONO O'ODHAM. I HAVE WORKED WITH THESE FOLKS ON SACRED SITES ISSUE AND HE KNOWS AS MUCH AS ANYBODY I MET. IT'S MY HONOR TO ASK HIM TO CLOSE WITH A PRAYER.

CLOSING PRAYER