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The Voice of the **Taino People**®

*The Voice of the Taino People is the Official News Journal of the United Confederation of Taino People (UCTP) and is distributed by the UCTP Office of International Relations and Regional Coordination
Volume 11, Issue 4, Oct. – Dec. 2008 © All Rights Reserved • ISSN 1553-9350*

Expert Meeting on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Concludes First Session in Geneva

Geneva, Switzerland (UCTP Taino News) - The United Nations **Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)** concluded its inaugural session in Geneva on Friday, 3 October with the adoption of a number of proposals to the Human Rights Council. The Durban Review Conference on Racism, the right of Indigenous People to education, and the participation of Indigenous Peoples in sessions of the Council and United Nations human rights treaty bodies were the focus of some of the proposals presented.

The Expert Mechanism is mandated to provide thematic expertise on the rights of Indigenous Peoples to the UN Human Rights Council. The group met from 1-3 October at the Palais des Nations in Geneva with more than 400 registered to the historic meeting. A majority of those attending the inaugural session were Indigenous Peoples who actively participated in the three-day meeting making recommendations to the newly formed body as well as relating human rights situations affecting their communities.

Among the many presentations made at the session a joint oral

statement on the points of consideration of the EMRIP study on Education was presented by the **International Indian Treaty Council (IITC)** and the **United Confederation of Taino People**. The presentation was made by IITC Executive Director **Andrea Carmen**. The IITC presented several other interventions during the session. Both the IITC and the UCTP participated within the Global Indigenous Caucus sessions to the EMRIP.

As mandated by the Human Rights Council through a resolution adopted at its session last week, the Expert Mechanism began to identify and suggest proposals for its consideration in 2009. In connection to the upcoming UN Durban Review Conference on racism taking place next year, the Experts were asked to assist the Preparatory Committee of the Conference by submitting recommendations as contributions to its outcome.

The Experts recommended that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action should acknowledge that the right of self-determination and the principle of free, prior and informed consent are now universally recognized through

the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In addition, the Experts recommended that the Declaration be considered as one of the human rights standards in the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review process.

The Experts also began work on preparing a study on lessons learned and challenges to achieve the implementation of the right of Indigenous Peoples to education to be concluded in 2009. In another proposal, the Expert Mechanism invited the **Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples** and the **Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues** to contribute to the study and requested the Human Rights Council to authorize a two-day technical workshop/review to finalize the study. *Story continues on pg. 2*



**UN Expert Indigenous Rights
Expert Meeting
(Cont. from pg. 1)**

At the meeting's opening, **John Henriksen** (Norway) was elected to serve as Chairperson-Rapporteur of the first session and **Jose Carlos Morales** (Costa Rica) as Vice Chairperson-Rapporteur.

The other three members of the Expert Mechanism are **Catherine Odimba Kombe** (Democratic Republic of the Congo), **Jannie Lasimbang** (Malaysia) and **Jose Molintas** (Philippines).

The Expert Mechanism will hold its second session in 2009 with the date to be decided at the 10th regular session of the Human Rights Council scheduled to be held in March 2009. ●

UCTPTN 10.06.2008

Indigenous Peoples Across the Americas Say No to Columbus

UCTP Taíno News - As the U.S. gets ready to celebrate Columbus Day, Indigenous Peoples across the Americas are mobilizing to call attention to the actual legacy of the 1492 arrival. Genocide, colonization, and globalization are some of the themes that will be focused on at anti-Columbus rallies, protests, marches, sit-ins, conferences, and memorial services.

Events are scheduled to take place over the weekend through Monday, the official Federally recognized holiday, in Denver, Colorado, Alcatraz, California, Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, Honolulu, Hawaii, New York City and throughout Columbia to name a few.

Arguably America's most controversial holiday, "Columbus Day" was created 100 years ago in Colorado and later became a

National holiday. Opponents of the holiday have long pointed out that Columbus himself was an African slave trader according to his own writings. His actions in the Caribbean launched an era of modern colonialism, rape, pillage, genocide, cultural destruction, slavery, economic & environmental devastation.



Hundreds gather in Denver, Colorado to Protest Columbus Day. (Photo credit: Indy Media)

With Colorado being the "birthplace" of Columbus Day in the U.S., it is no wonder that one of the most intense manifestations against the holiday takes place annually in protest of the Denver's Columbus Day Parade.

Actions there are organized by the **Transform Columbus Day Alliance** a coalition that rejects the celebration of Christopher Columbus historical misconceptions regarding Columbus and his "discovery" of the Americas. The Alliance includes a local American Indian Movement Chapter, several Peace and Justice organizations, and even a group called **Progressive Italians to Transform the Columbus Holiday**.

The **United Confederation of Taíno People (UCTP)** is another member of the Transform Columbus Day Alliance that is also supporting several other anti-Columbus Day actions. The UCTP has endorsed the annual Papal Bull Burning in Honolulu, Hawaii, a "Remembering our Ancestors"

memorial in New York City, and a protest in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico against the that city's proposed erection of a Columbus monument. The action in Borikén (Puerto Rico) is being organized by a local group called **Movimiento Indígena Chib'alo Jíbaro-Boricua**. In collaboration with local organizations, the UCTP is coordinating an international coalition against that project and plans to launch a web page dedicated to that issue.

The Annual Sunrise Gathering on Alcatraz Island is scheduled to take place on Monday, October 13th in conjunction with the "International Day of Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples 2008." These events are being organized by the International Indian Treaty Council and American Indian Contemporary Arts under the theme "Celebrating our Survival and Challenging the Myth of Columbus and "Doctrine of Discovery."

In perhaps one of the largest manifestations taking place over the "Columbus Holiday" weekend, Indigenous organizations and communities throughout in Colombia will mobilize to protest the U.S. Colombia Free Trade Agreement, Plan Colombia and the policies of the Bush-Backed Uribe Government. The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia, ONIC, has announced that mass protests will join the forces of indigenous, peasant, and popular movement.

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Indigenous Peoples Across the Americas Say No to Columbus
(Continued from pg.2)

With regard to the mobilizations in Columbia, the Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (ACIN) called on “national and international public opinion to express solidarity with the indigenous, peasant, afro-Colombian and working people of Colombia.”

For the ACIN October 12th marks the date over 500 years ago when “European Colonialism clenched its predator claws on this hemisphere. Those claws have maintained a grip on our peoples ever since.”

The ACIN further notes that the mobilizations in South America and throughout the Americas are a demand for dignity, justice, liberty and respect for life.

UCTPTN 10.11.2008

New Study Confirms Taino Ancestry Among Dominicans

Dominican Republic (UCTP Taino News) - According to a new DNA study conducted in the **Dominican Republic** a large segment of the country’s population retains indigenous **Taino** ancestry through their mother’s bloodline. The study, conducted by the **University of Puerto Rico**, reveals that approximately 15-18% of Dominicans have **Native American Mitochondrial DNA** out of a population of nearly 10,000,000.

The research is based on 1200 DNA samples taken throughout the island with some test areas revealing 90% of the subjects with Native ancestry. While the percentages are lower than similar studies conducted on the neighboring island of Puerto

Rico, the estimates defy “popular” accounts that the Indigenous Peoples were completely exterminated on that island.

“This study is a confirmation of what we have already known and promoted for years” stated **Roberto Borrero**, a representative of the **United Confederation of Taino People**. “Our people continue to exist within the multi-cultural mosaic that is the Caribbean despite the genocidal campaigns that began against us 516 years ago with the arrival of Columbus.”

One interesting aspect of the study is that individuals tested in the Cibao region seem to have a different DNA sequence than those tested in the southern part of the island. While both sequences are indigenous the variants could shed some light on ancient migrations. The study also reveals that the Taino descendants from the Cibao area could have been relatively “un-mixed racially” until more recent times. ●

Community Co-Management Agreement Signed for Orocovis Recreational Area

Orocovis, Boriken (UCTP Taino News) - The **Department of Natural Resources and Environment** signed a co-management agreement for the **Doña Juana Recreational Area** in Toro Negro State Forest with the Ala de la Piedra Community in Orocovis, Puerto Rico.

Naniki Reyes Ocasio, Board president for **Bo. Ala de la Piedra** signed the agreement on behalf of the community. The project is described as an environmental educational project and eco-tourism community self-determined initiative that will among other activities reopen a natural water fed pool in the Doña Juana Recreational Area in the Toro Negro State Forest in Orocovis.

Reyes Ocasio is also the founder of the **Caney**, Conclave Taino Guatukan de la Cordillera, a member organization, and Representative of the **United Confederation of Taino People**. ●

UCTPTN 08.29.2008

The Voice of the Taino People®

ISSN 1553-9350

Vol. 11, Issue 4 ♦ Oct. – Dec. 2008 ©

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United Confederation of Taino People, Inc.

PO Box 4515, Grand Central Station

New York, NY 10163

Email: Mukaro@uctp.org

Layout Design & Publisher:

Roberto Mukaro Agueibana Borrero

Email: Mukaro@uctp.org

Chief Editor & Boriken

Correspondent:

Roger Atibuibancex Hernandez

Email: Boriken@uctp.org

UCTP Web Portal:

<http://www.uctp.org/>

Webmaster:

Ericc Asubonex Diaz

Webmaster@uctp.org

Contributors:

The Voice of the Taino People Online

The Voice of the Taino People is a quarterly publication of the United Confederation of Taino People and is distributed by the UCTP Office of International Relations and Regional Coordination.

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Are you a registered and enrolled member of the Taino Tribal Nation? Get more information on the UCTP Taino Population Census and Inter-Tribal Registration Project at the UCTP Web Portal www.uctp.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CALENDER OF EVENTS

• Amerindian Heritage Week

Date: October 13-19, 2008 • Place: Trinidad and Tobago

Amerindian Heritage Day will be commemorated this year in Trinidad and Tobago with a week long commemoration from October 13-19, 2008. Taking place in the town of Arima, the program will include ceremonies, lectures, and special cultural presentations hosted by the Santa Rosa Carib Community. Indigenous delegations from around the Caribbean region are set to attend the events, which will include a meeting of the Caribbean Organization of Indigenous Peoples (COIP). For info see: <http://www.coipsnews.blogspot.com>

• Taíno Spirit Fundraiser

Date: Saturday, November 08 2008 • Place: Chelsea Studios, 151 West 26th Street, Suite 603, New York, NY

Hosted by Reina Miranda of Taino Spirit and Mia Hernandez of "Art by Mia". Performances, poets, and art exhibition and sale. Admission: \$10. Contact: RSVP 347.427.7088. www.tainospirit.com

• XXXIX Festival Nacional Indígena de Jayuya

Fecha: 19 al 23 de noviembre de 2008 • Lugar: Jayuya, Puerto Rico

Auspiciadores: Centro Cultural Jayuyano Alberto Suárez Martínez, Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, Oficina de Apoyo a las Artes y al Quehacer Cultural del ICP, Municipio de Jayuya, Abbott, JayuCoop, Baxter, Comisión Conjunta de Donativos Legislativos, PRIDCO- Área de Desarrollo Artesanal, UMET- Recinto de Jayuya, National Endowment for the Arts.

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**c/o United Confederation of Taino People
Office of International Relations and Regional Coordination
PO Box 4515, New York, NY 10163**