The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of indigenous peoples, James Anaya, visited Suriname from 13 to 16 March 2011, at the invitation of the Government of Suriname, to assist with efforts to advance the land and resource rights of the indigenous and tribal peoples of Suriname.

The visit took place in the context of Suriname’s implementation of the 2007 judgment in the case of the Saramaka People v. Suriname, in which the State was found by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to have violated the territorial rights of the Saramaka people.

Upon conclusion of the visit, the Special Rapporteur stated, “I believe that this visit was very fruitful and constituted a unique and valuable opportunity for dialogue and consultation with indigenous and tribal peoples of Suriname and the Suriname Government. I congratulate the Surinamese Government and the indigenous and tribal peoples of the country for their cooperation and openness in engaging with my mandate, in order to meet the many challenges existing in the country related to the domestic implementation of international human rights norms.”

During the brief visit, the Special Rapporteur met in Paramaribo with representatives of the Government, including the Vice President; the Minister of Regional Development; Minister of Justice and Police; Minister of Foreign Affairs; Minister of Natural Resources; Minister of Physical Planning, Land and Forest Management; Minister of Labour, Technology and Environment; and others from the Council of Ministers. He also held meetings with the indigenous organization VIDS, and Maroon representatives of VGS, the 12 Okanisi clan, the Matawai clan, the Paramakan community and the Bureau Moiwana, as well as with the United Nations Country Team. The Special Rapporteur expressed his thanks to all those that assisted in preparations for the visit, especially representatives at the Ministry of Regional Development, for their invaluable help in organizing and facilitating all aspects of the visit.
“I look forward to continued dialogue with the Government of Suriname and with the indigenous and tribal peoples of the country”, said Anaya, “in order to provide further guidance on the practical steps necessary to move forward with securing indigenous and tribal land rights, in accordance with relevant international treaties to which Suriname is a part.”

James Anaya (USA) is a Regents Professor and the James J. Lenoir Professor of Human Rights Law and Policy at the University of Arizona (United States). He was appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council to the mandate of Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples effective May 2008. The mandate was created in 2001 by the then Commission on Human Rights, and was renewed most recently in 2010 by the Human Rights Council for a three-year period.