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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: Tuesday, November 21, 2006

Statement by Lawrence T. Morgan, Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council:

On behalf of the Navajo Nation Council, I would like to wish you a warm holiday season as you take time to be with your family and friends. At Thanksgiving, we show our appreciation for what we have been blessed with through the year.

For the Navajo Nation Council, we extend our appreciation to the Navajo warriors who have fought and continue to fight for our rights as American citizens. While our warriors protect our rights, I feel it is the responsibility of us as elected leaders to defend and protect the rights of indigenous peoples.

Council delegates continue to advocate for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to be adopted by the United Nations. Because our Navajo people have served our country in the most honorable way, it is important that the United States recognizes our rights as indigenous peoples, and not vote in opposition of the Declaration when it is up for consideration.

As indigenous peoples, we have fundamental rights, such as the right to our language. Though it was our language that the Navajo Code Talkers used so heroically to defeat the enemy of the United States, our language – and thus our very way of life – continues to be threatened. In the State of Arizona, for example, a proposition was passed making English the official language of the state. Indigenous peoples the world over face these types of threats every day. It is time that our rights are fully recognized by the international community and promoted by the United States.

The United States has an opportunity to champion the cause of the Native Americans regarding the rights of indigenous peoples, yet it shies away from this opportunity, seemingly preferring to oppose the Declaration rather than to promote the rights of indigenous peoples. As Americans celebrate this holiday of Thanksgiving, remember that the indigenous peoples of this country continue to fight for full recognition of our rights.

The Navajo Nation is the leader among the world's indigenous peoples in exercising our right to protect our people and our land through the banning of uranium mining. There are many who do not want to abide by this law, therefore we must remain vigilant in ensuring that our people and our sacred land will not be sacrificed again. The Indigenous World Uranium Summit will be held November 30 to December 2, 2006 at the Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock to begin to address these issues with the international

indigenous community. I encourage our Navajo people to participate in these discussions regarding this important issue.

Though our way of life continues to be threatened by outside forces, the Council is thankful for the opportunity to advocate on behalf of the Navajo people and to be able to act on the issues that are most important to you. Ahe´hee` to each of you for your support as we look toward the future and toward fulfilling the plans and goals that we have set forth. To all our people, have a safe and happy holiday.