

**Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of
indigenous peoples - item 3 & 5**

Speaker: Geoffrey Kerosi

Mister Special Rapporteur,

Minority Rights Group (MRG) welcomes your report on indigenous peoples and Covid-19 recovery.

The disproportionate impact of Covid-19 has highlighted longstanding health disparities that are likely to remain in place without sustained action. In Kenya, for example, most health facilities serving indigenous communities are not operational, and those which are do not have adequate staff or resources. Indigenous persons with disabilities have described how social distancing was challenging, especially for the blind and those using wheelchairs.

Indigenous communities have also faced the sudden loss of livelihoods. Within days of travel bans curbing tourism, a key source of income, Batwa in DRC faced destitution. Fortress conservation also meant that they did not have access to the traditional food and medicine sources.

At the same time, many indigenous peoples have been exercising self-determination and devising successful responses to the pandemic. In Guatemala, Maya women leaders have been countering increased rates of violence against women, through local community initiatives.

This shows that governments must consult meaningfully with indigenous communities and fully respect indigenous peoples' right to free, prior and informed consent in Covid recovery planning.

I thank you.