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STATEMENT PRESENTED TO THE 3RD SEESION OF THE UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES -10TH-21ST MAY -NEWYORK 2004
BY: OGIEK PEOPLES NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OPNA,OGIEK RURAL INTEGRAL PROJECTS ORIP AND OGIEK PEOPLES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OPDP.

- **By:MARY NASIEKU**

STATUS OF OGIEK WOMEN IN KENYA

Mr. Chairman ,distinguished guests, Indigenous brothers and sisters,excellencies,ladies and gentlemen:

Mr. chair this is a joint statement on behalf of the Ogiek people's national assembly OPNA,Ogiek Rural integral Projects ORIP and Ogiek Peoples Dvelopment Program OPDP:

Mr. chair I consider a great honor to address this distinguished gathering in its 3rd session of Permanent forum for Indigenous peoples. I represent an indigenous community called Ogiek a hunter-gatherer in Kenya.

Mr. Chairman I feel privileged to present to you the situation of the most vulnerable section of the Ogiek people i.e. women, our mothers, grandmothers, aunties and daughters.In a population of about 25,000 people with an illiteracy rate of above –80%, Ogiek Women are leading in illiteracy of above 95%.

Issues about Ogiek Women are just like crossing Sahara desert on foot. Ogiek women are not only faced with marginalization they are also victims of discrimination,social injustices and violation of their human rights.They are faced with stark reality where they are married off at tender age and hence denied to grow to be productive citizens to there community.They lack basic health facilities and are forced to udergo female Genital Mutilation FGM which graduates them for marriage.The national policy does not recognize Indigenous women right to property,hence the land is the preserve of men.They do not have access to political processes to input on issues affecting there lives and children.

The Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted by General Assembly resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979, seems to have no effect on the indigenous Ogiek Women or Indigenous women in general.

Mr. Chair, many are the issues about women more especially the Ogiek Women, in summary **Ogiek** women with an illiteracy rate of above 95% have suffered a great deal in all aspects of life, in hands of their men with little formal education as well as in decision making .Ogiek women and the girl child are being discriminated even to the point that they are denied the basic primary education in favor of their brothers, they conclude with a slogan "*after all they will be married off.*"

In the history of the community not a single Ogiek girl has attained a university degree despite 40 years of Kenya's independence. The Free primary Education introduced by the government recently does not benefit Ogiek as in the first place there are no schools. This is just an example of the pathetic situation of the Ogiek women of Kenya. Due to lack of Education Ogiek women are faced with the following setbacks:

1. lack of basic knowledge of their rights, which are being violated day by day
2. lack of information of the dangers of Female Genital Mutilation commonly known as FGM, which has led to reproductive difficulties as well as being prone to HIV/AIDS pandemic
3. Lack of employment
4. Discrimination and marginalization

Mr. Chairman may I make some recommendations to the 3rd session of the permanent forum and any other interested Women organizations internationally that there is a need to sensitize and involve the Ogiek women on issues affecting them and call upon UNESCO and Inter-Un agencies to support African indigenous women in their struggles.

Mr. Chair, finally we are calling for the extension of the decade and speedy conclusion and adoption of the draft declaration on indigenous peoples.

Thank You
Mary Nasieku
Daniel Kobei