

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
8th Session, 20-24 July 2015

Agenda Item 7: Study and advice on the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples with respect to their cultural heritage

Brazilian Statement

Mr. Chair,

The cultural heritage of indigenous peoples is inseparable from their very identity as distinct human groups. In one way or another, this topic is mentioned in ten articles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, reflecting the importance and the multifaceted nature of indigenous peoples' cultural heritage.

The commitment to promote and protect this invaluable heritage is also enshrined in Constitution of Brazil, home to over three hundred indigenous peoples, who speak nearly two hundred different languages.

We would like to speak today about one recent normative development in Brazil which builds on these constitutional provisions. It is the regulation regarding tourism in indigenous peoples' lands, adopted last June by FUNAI, the government authority responsible for indigenous peoples in Brazil.

Tourism in indigenous peoples' lands is a reality in many parts of the world, and Brazil is no exception. With this in mind, FUNAI has issued a new Normative Instruction to ensure that this activity takes place in a sustainable manner, promoting and protecting indigenous peoples' rights.

According to the new regulation, an indigenous community that wishes tourism receive visitors shall prepare a Visitation Plan with detailed provisions regarding protection of their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge, as well as the environmental integrity of their territories. The regulation requires that the indigenous community concerned retain control of the activities, even when there are other partners involved. It also provides for the economic sustainability of the activities, to make sure the resulting revenue is evenly distributed within the community.

To make a long story short, the aim of this new regulation is to avoid the risks associated with unregulated tourism and to reap the potential benefits of this activity, bringing revenue to the communities, protecting their integrity and identity, and raising awareness about the richness of their cultural heritage.

Thank you.