

Structural Analysis of Cultural Systems

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Organisation: Structural Analysis of Cultural Systems

Item 3: Study and advice on indigenous peoples' rights in the context of borders, migration and displacement.

The border of Brazil and French Guiana: A case study

Thank you, Mr. Chairman / Madam Chairperson,

... for the opportunity to briefly report about the situation we found in March 2019 while carrying out fieldwork in northern South America, as this is of relevance to the topic covered by this item. The Oyapock river is the eastern border of French Guiana with Brazil. Large parts of this region's forests have been declared nature reserves, and along with that, indigenous peoples like the Teko and the Wayampi are forbidden to hunt and gather there. On the French side, they are paid some compensation for that, and as they are considered European citizens, social benefits and children's allowances are also paid to indigenous peoples. However, their costs of living are not comparable to those of Europe, and in effect, money is often invested in alcohol. Even mothers are already drinking in the mornings, and it is normal that parts of the communities are fully drunk in the afternoons and evenings. There are hardly any indigenous settlements on the Brazilian side of the border, as this monetary policy has attracted many indigenous people to the French side. Yes, the border is open to migration, which can take place largely uncontrolled. This seems to be an ideal situation with regard to Article 36 of the UNDRIP. But the actual policy is an infringement of indigenous rights by displacing peoples from their forest lands, who are then calmed down by payments, which are an incentive to further migration. In fact, we can witness the deterioration of indigenous persons, communities and their cultures. Although many indigenous people are affected, not only at that border, this tragic kind of constellation has not been regarded by EMRIP's study. It would be helpful, though, to search for better ways, so that advice for policy improvement can be given.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman / Madam Chairperson.

