

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (6th Session)

Item 7

Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland on July 8-12, 2013

Statement by the Foundation for GAIA

Thank you Mister Chairman,

The Foundation for GAIA would like to take this opportunity to thank the SR James Anaya for his work and dedication over these last years. We shall miss him. A personal thank you from all of us!

We would like to encourage indigenous communities and organisations to identify those who could best represent their interests as the next Special Rapporteur and to ask this person (or these people) to put themselves forward and register their interest to the OHCHR. This is especially relevant as the next mandate will in all likelihood entail a focus on compliance and the implementation of treaty bodies.

Culture, belief, as well as land and resources have been extensively mentioned during these days. Cultural and sacred sites are being affected by mining and/or logging or other development activities. Related to this is the conversion of IP's territories into National Parks or Protected Areas.

Is this particular issue of cultural and sacred sites being discussed with states and the various respective industries? Such sites can be small, but can also be a sacred landscape; containing mountains, lakes or valleys which are vital for maintaining health, balance and protection of whole regions. The issue of cultural and sacred sites would concern a number of thematic mandates, be this the ones on indigenous peoples rights, on cultural rights, on the enjoyment of a healthy environment, on rights of minorities, on freedom of belief and to UNESCO, as related to cultural heritage. This shows the linkages and correlations that exist with the various special procedures mandates and how a statement on one issue can be brought to the attention of at least six thematic mandates. However, should ramifications of extractive activities include the effects on health, on water and on food production, then a further links with a three mandates could be envisaged. As Kanyinke Sena from the UNPFII mentioned, there are increasingly more NGOs that will prioritise human rights while still working on e.g. on their environmental mandate. Because of this the Foundation for GAIA urges Indigenous Peoples and NGOs to work together so that the various issues related to Indigenous Peoples can be represented in all forums.

Thank you Mister Chairman.