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By: Hassan ID Balkassm,  
Tamaynut and IPACC Chair



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Ladies and gentlemen, heads of state, UN Agencies, international organizations, sisters and brothers, representatives of IPS organizations:

My name is Hassan Id Balkassm, and I am from the Amazigh people in Morocco, North Africa. I would like to take the floor on behalf of IPACC (Indigenous Peoples African Coordinating Committee) and the Tamaynut Association, which is part of the larger Amazigh Movement in North and West Africa. Tamaynut is affiliated with the World Amazigh Congress, and we would like to make some statements and recommendations regarding this year's theme: "Indigenous Women"

- 1) We support the recommendations adopted by the three regional conferences of Indigenous Women held in Africa, Asia and Latin America; and also the recommendations of the Women's Caucus, held at the Church Center last week.
- 2) We suggest the addition of another recommendation. We add and strongly support the constitutional recognition of Indigenous identities, cultures, and languages in order to protect Indigenous peoples. This constitutional protection is necessary for Indigenous peoples in general, but especially for Indigenous women. Constitutional recognition is a cornerstone for policy development, and it is key to our survival.
- 3) All of these recommendations are justified by the everyday realities of all Indigenous peoples, especially in Africa. This continent suffers because women are excluded in general from constitutional protection. The effect this has on Indigenous Women is even greater.
- 4) Human Development reports indicate that the situation in Africa is growing worse every year. The main cause of this situation is the exclusion of women, especially Indigenous women, from the possibility of enjoying their own fundamental rights and freedoms necessary for life.
- 5) This situation is due to the exclusion of Indigenous women from active participation at the national level, both in cultural and political life. Consequently, African society becomes deprived of the benefits of this participation.
- 6) Finally, Mr. Chair, I would like to inform you about the new developments in my country, Morocco. Most notably, during the last two years of the Decade of Indigenous People:
  - a. The Amazigh identity was recognized in 2001, and King Mohamed VI created an Institute for Amazigh Culture.
  - b. The Moudouana (family law) was changed, and we now have one of the best systems of family laws in the entire Muslim world.
- 7) Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that, despite all this development, assimilation policies are still at ground level. But we are working toward policies that are intended to establish a more democratic and inclusive approach, emphasizing human emancipation and the advancement of freedom and peace.

Hassan Id Balkassm

Africa