



NGO in Special Consultative Status with
the Economic and Social Council of the United
Nations

SYRIAC UNIVERSAL ALLIANCE

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15 July 2010

Human Rights Council

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Third session - Geneva, 12–16 July 2010

Item 5. Proposals to Human Rights Council for consideration and approval

**Oral Statement by the Syriac Universal Alliance on the theme of:
*Active participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making processes***

Distinguished delegates of the Expert Mechanism,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Shlomo 'al kulkhu! Greetings to all of you, as we say in our Aramaic mother tongue!

We are grateful to the members of this Session, in particular to the Honorable President and the Rapporteur, for this crucial platform in which voiceless peoples are duly given a voice.

The Syriac Universal Alliance is the only recognized Aramaic-speaking NGO in Consultative Status with the ECOSOC. We give the indigenous Aramean (otherwise known as Syriac) people of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon a voice at the United Nations.

We will use our own Aramean people as an example as to why we need the proposals which the SUA will present in this statement.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is important to note that the Arameans have become a diaspora people in the last few decades due to unfortunate circumstances in their home countries. They are scattered all over the world and have large concentrations in Western Europe, the USA, Canada and Australia.

Today they are struggling hard to survive in both their home countries and host countries. For instance, their unique 3,000-years old cultural heritage is in serious danger of extinction.

In this reality, the Arameans still lack official recognition in their home countries. They are not recognized as a distinct people, let alone as an *indigenous* people.

As a result, they are not able to benefit from international rights and articles as guaranteed, above all, by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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Represented in the USA, the UK, Australia, Turkey, Lebanon, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Therefore, Mr. Chairperson,

The Syriac Universal Alliance offers four recommendations to the Expert Mechanism from our practical experience as a neglected indigenous people who have never been able to participate actively or equally in decision-making processes.

We request the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People to bring to the attention of the Human Rights Council:

- 1. to find still more efficient ways within the UN through which indigenous peoples, and especially those whose cultural heritage and identity are being seriously endangered, can attain official recognition from nation-states which refuse to do so,;*
- 2. to instruct the governments and mainstream media of such nation-states about the benefits of both acknowledging their indigenous peoples and implementing the UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples;*
- 3. to distinguish between recognized and unrecognized indigenous peoples, and give special attention to the marginal role of unrecognized indigenous peoples in nation-states;*
- 4. to convince nation-states to allow an interventionist role by the UN on behalf of recognized and especially unrecognized indigenous peoples with the intention of protecting, developing and promoting them and their fundamental rights.*

These proposals are submitted to the Expert Mechanism in order not to forget the peoples who are *not yet* able to benefit from the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The recognition of being indigenous is a must if, as we all aim for, indigenous peoples can be enabled to enjoy the rights of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We are delighted to note that this has also been stated emphatically by the Chairperson, but we cannot stress this issue enough.

Thank you for your attention.

Syriac Universal Alliance

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