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Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, government representatives, United Nations Specialized Agencies, distinguished indigenous brother and sister, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all I bring you the greetings from Batwa community of the Great Lakes Region and thank very much United Nations Voluntary Fund for their financial support which enabled me to attend this second session of the Permanent Forum in New york.

Mr. Chairman it gives me a great pleasure to speak on behalf of my organization and Batwa community of the Great Lakes Region in this Forum under item 4 (a) the **Economic and Social Development**. As you may know Batwa are the first inhabitants of Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda countries. Traditionally the Batwa were forest hunter-gatherers. As Batwa were driven out of their forest areas, many became potters, to the extent that this craft became synonymous with Batwa ethnic identity. Men collect and carry clay to the house, and women make and fire pots before they are sold. Increasingly, however, modern industrial substitutes have replaced many of their clay handmade products, thus depriving them of an important source of income.

A comparison of census figures from 1978 and 1991 for instance indicates that a 40 per cent fall in the Batwa population, as opposed to a 50 per cent (approximately) rise in the population of other Rwandans. Although little research has been conducted on Batwa demographic trends, it seems likely that as well as loss of Batwa land and livelihoods, high infant mortality rates, extreme poverty and poor access to healthcare have contributed to this decline. The Batwa's extreme poverty prevents them from participation effectively in national economy.

Mr. Chairman with your permission I would like to make following recommendations through this Forum:

➤ To have a coordination unit for the economic and social development within the Permanent Forum.

➤ Reforms to education and health sectors envisaged by the Rwandan Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) should take appropriate account of the rights and needs of the Batwa communities. Batwa participation should be sought in the elaboration of new policies in these sectors.

➤ International development agencies operating in Rwanda should elaborate program activities in cooperation with Batwa communities to support them to overcome their situation of extreme poverty

➤ Displacement of Batwa communities from protected areas should be avoided, and past displacement should be compensated appropriately.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.