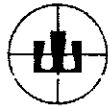


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Ecospirituality Foundation Onlus

N.G.O. in Consultative Status with the United Nations

**Seventh Session of the
United Nations
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
New York, 21 April – 2 May 2008**

Agenda Item 9

Statement by

Rosalba Nattero

Representative:

*Apache Survival Coalition, Arizona
Wiran Aboriginal Corporation, Australia
Menhirs Libres, Brittany
Bassa Peoples, Cameroon
United Confederation of Taino People
Ensemble Allons dans la Paix, Benin*

The megalithic complex of Carnac, sacred site for the Breton community, has been fenced off by the French government for over 17 years, which plans to transform the site into a museum.

Through the charges received by Céline Mary, president of the organization Menhirs Libres, we appeal to this Forum so that this native community may regain the right to use the megalithic complex of Carnac as spiritual reference.

The violation of an Indigenous People's sacred land is a severe peril to its identity. We firmly believe that every People has the right to preserve their traditional knowledge and spiritual beliefs.

Therefore, we make the following recommendations to the Permanent Forum:

- 1) Urge States to support Indigenous Peoples to defend their traditional knowledge and sacred lands, in agreement to the principles of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with precise reference to Article 11;
- 2) Strongly solicit UNESCO to include Mount Graham, the megalithic site of Carnac and the sacred mountain Ngog Lituba in the World Heritage Register;
- 3) Strongly recommend the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) to safeguard the above-mentioned sacred sites as cultural heritage;
- 4) Urge European States to return the Ancestor Human Remains, spiritual properties and cultural artifacts kept in European museums, of the Wamba Wamba Nation (Australia) and of the Bassa People (Cameroon), in agreement to the principles of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with precise reference to Article 12.

In conclusion, we believe the identity of native Peoples to be based on their traditional knowledge. It is in these roots that they find reference to their history and spirituality.

Without these roots the identity of Indigenous Peoples would disappear, taking with it the hope of peace and brotherhood for all humanity.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you Madam Chair,

Our organization, Ecospirituality Foundation, is mainly aimed at the defense of Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge and sacred lands.

The Ecospirituality Foundation represents six indigenous communities through official mandates and today we stand before this assembly to deliver a joint-appeal on behalf of the Indigenous Communities that we represent – Communities that highlight emblematic cases of violations of Indigenous Peoples' spiritual rights.

The first case regards the Apache San Carlos, Arizona.

On official charges received by Ola Cassadore, President of the Apache Survival Coalition, we appeal in defense of Mount Graham, the maximum sacred site of the Apache, desecrated and jeopardized by the construction of an international astronomical observatory of immense controversy. This project is undertaken, along with the University of Arizona, by the Vatican and the Arcetri Observatory of Italy, funded by the Italian government.

Despite the 18 years of Apache protests, despite the numerous appeals and the vast support of both indigenous and non-indigenous organizations world-wide, Mount Graham continues to be both desecrated and put at risk, whilst the Apache continue to be deprived of their sacred land.

All of the Western Apache tribes have united together in this protest. They have met many times with the Forest Service for the enlistment of the Mountain in the National Register of Historic Places, but without success, despite the fact that the site has all the necessary requirements for registration.

Our second case regards the Wamba Wamba Nation of the Native Australians that includes the Clans of Victoria and South Wales of Australia. Gary Murray, president of the Wiran Aboriginal Corporation and of the Wamba Wamba Nation has been the promoter of an effort for the recovery of the Wamba Wamba Ancestor remains, spread throughout many of the world's museums. Much of these remains have not yet been obtained and the Wamba Wamba Nation strongly seeks to reclaim its ancestors' remains.

Another emblematic case regards the Bassa People of Cameroon. By official mandate of its spokesperson, Samuel Brice Tjomb, we appeal for the 12 tribes of the mountain Ngog-Lituba so that the Bassa People can be helped to defend its maximum sacred land and freely exercise its spiritual and cultural rights.

The Bassa People denounce the desecrations of their natural and spiritual sanctuary by the Roman Catholic Church, that over a decade ago placed a cross and a statue of the Virgin Mary on the mountain top.

Our final case regards an Indigenous European community that is currently impeded in the exercise of its free spiritual identity.

Europe is also home to Indigenous Peoples that have similar traditions to other Natives around the world. But the majority was destroyed by the historical power.

In France, at Carnac (Brittany) there is the a traditional community that can't openly practice it's spiritual identity.