

UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

SEVENTEEN SESSION - NEW YORK

17 April 2018

INTERVENTION DELIVERED BY YINGIYA MARK GUYULA ON BEHALF OF THE ABORIGINAL RIGHTS COALITION.

Agenda Item 8: Discussion of theme “Indigenous Peoples’ collective rights to lands, territories and resources”

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Thank-you Madam Chair

My name is Yingiya Mark Guyula, I am speaking under the Aboriginal Rights Coalition of Australia. I am a Yolngu leader from Arnhem Land in Australia. I am a leader of the Liya-Dhalinyirr Clan part of the Djambarrpuyngu nation. In this capacity I am also an authority of the Yolngu Ngarra-institution-of-nationhood. In 2016 I was elected as an Independent Member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly.

Yolngu are a sovereign people. We occupy our territory and we have always occupied it. It is our ancestral country to which we belong- and yet we are forced by Australian Government policy and manipulated by powerful company interests so that we have very little control or autonomy over the way in which we can determine progress for our society.

Our “Collective Rights to land, territory and natural resources” are being destroyed by three core issues:

- Government Licensing regimes that stop our clans and ringitj nations from utilising resources in our territory - this impedes our ability to start and maintain businesses and redevelop our own economy post-colonisation;
- An inability to contest Government Land Council decisions about our land that we do not agree with, including contested decisions about ownership of land and their division of income from our estates;
- Government policies that are recolonising Yolngu people into hub towns and away from homeland estates.

My people are crying out for justice and we are not being heard. I now want the UN to intervene on our behalf.

I recommend:

1. That the Forum strongly petition the Australian Government to recognise Yolngu Sovereignty and our Maḏayin system of Law over our territorial land, and enter into Treaty negotiations directly with Indigenous Nations.

Thank you.