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**LAND, TERRITORY, AND NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES
AFFECTING THE ECONOMIES OF THE INDIGENOUS
COMUNITIES OF THE SAHEL AND THE HORN OF
AFRICA**

*Collective statement by: IPACC and the African Caucus: Sahel
and Horn of Africa Subregion*

This Sahelian environment that stretches all the way from Senegal to Somalia bordering the " Sahara desert" in the north and the "Sudan savannah" in the south, with an annual rainfall of less than 50cm per annum, is the home for many indigenous communities like the Mbororo (Cameroun and Chad), Tuareg (Niger) and the Kanuris (Nigeria) who depend on pastoralism, fishing, irrigation farming and mineral extraction as their main activities of livelihoods.

Desertification is a primary issue faced by Sahelian communities; the indigenous communities are continuously losing their grazing fields, farmlands, and even villages to the encroaching "Sahara desert" from the north. Indigenous communities in the Sahelian region are currently trying their best in control of the desert encroachment through tree-planting campaigns and programmes on their own, however, the UN does not currently recognize their

contributions and does not include their participation in its desertification activities in the region.

A second issue is the rapid decline in the volume of the water of the "Lake Chad" because this is main source of water supply, fishing and some other natural resources like the potassium, in addition to irrigation and pastoral farming by the indigenous communities along the shores of the lake. Sahelian indigenous peoples depend on Lake Chad, so the more the Lake dries, poverty and unemployment increases among indigenous communities. There is currently far too little attention paid by governments and UN agencies working in the area to address the impact of the declining Lake Chad upon the futures of Sahelian indigenous communities.

Recommendation:

1. We call on Sahelian governments via the African Union and UN development agencies such as UNDP, UNESCO, UNEP, FAO, and IFAD, to ensure the participation of the indigenous communities of the Sahel and the Horn in all decision-making related to land and territory.
2. Indigenous issues should be mainstreamed into the UN Convention on Control of Desertification (CCD) and related desertification conventions. Indigenous peoples should be recognized as a 'major group' for the CCD Conference of Parties.
3. Recognition by African governments to communal lands and stopping to give lands and territories to bio-fuels.
4. Constructions of dams along all feeder rivers of the Lake Chad should be stopped. Just like Nigeria, all the other countries bordering Lake Chad should establish Lake Chad Development Commissions in their respective countries in order to promote irrigation and pastoral farmings in the Sahelian environment.

5. Cooperation with UNESCO, CCD and CBD on traditional knowledge of biodiversity and sustainable development of arid areas in the Sahelian region; indigenous peoples must be involved in decision-making processes.
6. Finally, we urge African states to support the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples without amendments.