



**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Populations  
Second Session, New York, May 12 -23, 2003**

**AGENDA ITEM 4(d) - Human Rights**

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**ORGANIZATION:** MBOSCUA (Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association) - Cameroon

Mr Chairman

Ladies and Gentlemen

Accept fraternal greetings from the Mbororo of Cameroon. The indigenous peoples of Cameroon particularly the Mbororo, the Pygmy peoples and the Kirdis join the rest of the indigenous peoples around the world in offering their support to the Permanent Forum, the Work Group on Indigenous Populations, the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights and other structures created in the last two decades to protect, promote, and advance indigenous rights at the level of the UN. We also support wholeheartedly the four decision recommendations in general and the one on human rights in particular made to the Council by this Forum during its last session. We hope that the promotion, protection and advancement of the collective rights of indigenous people will be better served with the implementation of these recommendations.

It is all very well to adopt international treaties, declarations, conventions and pacts on indigenous rights. However, unless these rights are implemented, monitored and evaluated at the national and local levels, they will not serve the purpose for which they are intended. In the case of the Mbororo apart from a handful of University graduates and school leavers, the majority does not understand international rights frameworks let alone secure them for themselves. The strategies this Forum recommends to the Council must, therefore, include mechanisms of operationalising these rights at the grassroots. Empowering grassroots peoples and their organisations is one of the most effective ways and means of ensuring that what we craft at the international arena does have effect at the grassroots. That it can become reality for the majority of those who cannot be here with us today. The Mbororo and the other indigenous peoples of Cameroon are confronted with major violations on daily basis.

The Mbororo face blatant violations of human rights, they are denied their right to education, right to healthcare, to development and most importantly their right to the lands they live on. In the last 17 years a multi-millionaire rancher has systematically confiscated our grazing lands displacing our people with direct collusion of government officials. Cattle are everything to us but we cannot own or herd our cattle without land. As I speak at least five of our community activists are in prison for opposing land takeover by this powerful rancher. Four of the five were sentenced recently to 10-year prison terms on trumped up charges by a military tribunal. I was imprisoned for 3 weeks and then charged in court for a crime I did not commit. A court cleared me just two days before I left for this Forum. A case of torture brought against a gendarme commander by one of our imprisoned colleagues is ongoing at the Bamenda military tribunal. These are just two examples of the daily persecution we face in Cameroon. The government of Cameroon has not resolved the four MBOSCUA cases highlighted by the Special Rapporteur on Torture in 2000.

The World Bank sponsored Cameroon-Chad Oil Pipeline Project has had devastating negative impact on indigenous people in Cameroon. Their lands have been infested, their farms destroyed and their animals endangered. All efforts to get the World Bank to compensate the Mbororo whose lands were affected have failed on the excuse that they do not have statutory rights to the lands. Recommendations of NGOs on the matter have been sidelined.

To conclude, we urge the Forum to recommend to the Human Rights Commission to monitor the situation of human rights in Cameroon and cause the Cameroon authorities to respect international agreements they have ratified on human rights. We also urge the Forum to recommend to the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights to visit Cameroon to investigate the situation of Indigenous Peoples in our country. Finally, we also urge the Forum to recommend to the Council to encourage the Resident UN Mission and other UN bodies in Cameroon to establish permanent dialogue with indigenous organizations in the country to advance indigenous peoples rights, because of the high level Government corruption.

Thank you for your attention. **Contacts:** Musa Ndamba, MBOSCUA, PO BOX 221, BAMENDA CAMEROON. Email: [musandamba@yahoo.com](mailto:musandamba@yahoo.com)