

12th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)

Item 9 : Future work of the Expert Mechanism, including focus of future thematic studies

Prepared by Ben W. Sherman (WINTA Chairman) & Aurélie Debusschère, 18 July 2019.

This intervention is presented by Aurélie Debusschère, European Representative of the World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (WINTA) <http://www.winta.org/>

Research & recommendations on violations of UNDRIP in the International Travel and Tourism Industry

Thank you Madam Chair, Expert members, Indigenous relatives.

My name is Aurélie Debusschère, speaking on behalf of the World Indigenous Tourism Alliance, which is an indigenous created and managed organization advocating the rights of indigenous people in the tourism sector.

The travel and tourism industry has become a world economic powerhouse, reaching 1.4 billion international visitors in 2018, according to UNWTO. The growth of tourism will exceed that of all other international retail and service sectors in the coming years.

The travel and tourism industry has the power and resources to do great good in the world if it so chooses. But all too often, the tourism industry, in collaboration with state governments, local governments, corporate interests and certain NGOs, has done great harm to Indigenous and minority groups. Much of the harm has been brought about in the name of conservation and tourism development.

Some of the violations are direct and explicit including removal from home territories, invasion and illegal trespass, environmental degradation, and loss of subsistence harvesting and hunting. Violations that are less obvious but ultimately just as harmful to Indigenous cultures are the loss of sacred sites and marginalization of Indigenous peoples in societies, all combined with an unwillingness by nation states to acknowledge and enforce Indigenous human rights.

WINTA sees the eviction of the Batwa people from their traditional forest homelands in Uganda as a most egregious example of forced displacement resulting in decades of extreme hardship for the Batwa. In another case, India is currently developing plans to evict large numbers of tribal people from their homelands, again in the name of forest conservation. India's tribal peoples face a deadly threat to their future from a Supreme Court eviction order supporting plans to militarize their forests and undermine their forest rights and access. WINTA can cite many more cases of direct Indigenous rights violations by various actors within the tourism industry, all resulting in some form of harmful displacement.

WINTA is convinced solutions exist that would allow Indigenous groups to remain in their traditional homelands and become participants in tourism development according to their will within their territories. We need only look at Namibia to see the successful integration of local communities in wildlife and natural resource conservation throughout the country. Indigenous groups have long existed in close harmony with their natural environments, demonstrating the best form of ancestral stewardship the world needs to tackle the climate crisis.

WINTA respectfully proposes that the Expert Mechanism initiates an international study of human rights violations impacting Indigenous peoples in the field of international tourism, along with recommendations for adopting programs in compliance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, counting with the undeniable support of WINTA.

Thank you, Esteemed Panel.