

17th Session United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations

Item: 5

Speaker: Ms. A-Wu Ligerlalo

Organisation: Aboriginal Cultural Promotion Association (ACPA)

Thank you, Madam Chair for giving me the floor to speak on behalf of my people.

My name is A-Wu, a Paiwan person from Ping-Dung. I am here speaking on behalf of the twelve indigenous tribes inhabit on our island, we are the original masters of our island. Currently, indigenous peoples make up 1.7% of the island's total population, the rest are recent immigrants from outside. Fifty years ago when the foreign government came and ruled our island with their weapons, our hunting grounds, forests, rivers, and other natural resources are exploited by these foreigners. Until today, many of our tribesmen still do not have legal titles to their traditional lands. In other words, the lands that we have been cultivating do not owned by us, the houses that we have been living are illegal housing. Furthermore, our forests and rivers are demarcated as government's properties.

When the banks calculate our land and housing into money value, they give us the lowest rate, which is hundred times lower than the real market value. This has forced us into extreme economic embarrassment and poverty. With decreasing land and low-income status, we can no longer produce enough agricultural products to support our standard living or compete with other big-money industries. The implementation of the WTO is going to further worsen the situation.

The worst part is, the policy of the colonial government has stated that, for national needs, the government can collect aboriginal lands under any condition and without indigenous peoples' consent. Based on this ground, the government has used many means to collect our land, such as for military purpose, national park, or deposit ground for nuclear wastes. The few aboriginal lands that are left un-collected, we only have the rights to use but no rights to land titles. If we are to bring up a dispute or protest, the military troops and polices will interfere and suppress us. Indigenous peoples' living space is diminishing.

Another policy stated that, once an indigenous female marries a non-indigenous male, she will automatically lost her indigenous status. But, in the case of a non-indigenous female marrying an indigenous male, her status remains un-changed. With the increasing rate of mix-marriage, many of us lost our indigenous status. This reflects on the official document is a negative growth-rate of indigenous population. The impact of this policy has also denied many half-blood indigenous persons the status and right to inherit aboriginal lands. This is how the aboriginal lands are lost and became the legal properties of the government. Although, in 1997, the government has made minor changes to their policy, due to our strong demand and protest, the harms and lost have already made and the government refuses to take a responsible stand. It also refuses to apologise for what it has done to us.

My dear indigenous sisters and brothers, when we lost our indigenous status and land, what is there left for us? I here present my peoples current situation before you and hope to raise your attention and support for our struggle. Thank you all, and thank you Madam Chair.

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