



EXPERT MECHANISM ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

14TH SESSION

PACIFIC AND ASIA REGIONAL MEETING: 13 JULY 2021

Agenda Item 8: Draft Report on efforts to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous Peoples and the Right to Self-Determination

Intervention delivered by Yinija Guyula, Dalkarramirr (Senior Leader) of the Liya-Dhalinymirr Clan, of the Djambarrpuyŋu nation, representative of the Yolŋu Nŋarra-institution-of-nationhood & elected Independent Member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly & member of the Indigenous Peoples Organisation of Australia.

Thank you Madam Chair

My name is Yinija Guyula, I am a Yolŋu leader from Arnhem Land in Australia. I am a Senior Leader of the Liya-Dhalinymirr Clan part of the Djambarrpuyŋu nation. In 2016 and 2020 I was elected as an Independent Member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly on the platform of Treaty and Self-Determination. I am also a member of the Indigenous Peoples Organisation of Australia.

Yolŋu 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 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 relocating Yolŋu people away from ancestral homeland Estates and into 'hub' towns.

Our 'right to Self-Determination' is destroyed by these issues and also the ongoing undermining of our authority in our territory:

- Our justice and dispute resolution processes, and our Elders, have been undermined by the over-riding use of non-Yolŋu law and justice systems, enforced by armed Police Officers;
- Decisions about our economic, social and cultural development are enforced by Governments who control the resources for our otherwise autonomous function.

Consequently, I recommend:

1. **That the Forum strongly petition the Australian Government to recognise Yolŋu Sovereignty, our Maḏayin system of Law and our Authority over our territorial land, and enter into vital Treaty negotiations directly with Indigenous Nations to ensure the survival of our people and culture.** Thank you.