

**The Doctrine of Discovery.**  
**Statement by the San Caucus from Southern Africa to the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of**  
**the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)**  
**7 - 18 May 2012**  
**UN Headquarters, New York City.**

Mr. Chairman, honored guests and members of the Permanent Forum,

We the San caucus of southern Africa, today wish to speak, and bring to the attention of our brothers and sisters here gathered, issues that need addressing as a matter of urgency.

The San of southern Africa call for recognition of their land and resource rights in all the categories of land in southern Africa: state land, freehold land, communal (tribal) land, conservancies, wildlife management areas, and reserved areas. We also call for close consultation on all development projects including those involving extractive resource exploration and exploitation (mineral, gas, and oil resources). There should be no involuntary relocation from protected areas including national parks, game reserves, and monuments.

Commercial cattle farming and agricultural production has become a continuous threat to the land rights of the San, whilst extractive industries cause irreparable harm to our ancestral lands.

The San are known for the reverence in which we hold land, and for sustainably managing and nurturing the earth since time immemorial.

In a world threatened by climate change, the loss of biodiversity, water shortages and threats to food security for billions of people, we submit that our land use systems should be protected and supported in the legislative and policy frameworks on our continent and beyond.

San and other Africans reject the doctrine of discovery. We have lived on the African continent for millions of years and occupied and utilized all of the habitats of the continent thousands of years before Europeans arrived. We thus call on Southern African Governments, SADC and the African Union and the African Commission to recognise our role as the stewards and the custodians of the earth. The San people have spiritual connections with the environment and it is our sacred duty to take care of the environment. Land and the protection of the environment is central to our culture, our dignity and to our existence as a people.

The San caucus recommends to our national governments, regional, continental and international bodies that:

1. Free, prior and informed consent should be observed in relation to the lands of the San, and our values of reciprocity and equitable sharing of resources should be embedded in policy;
2. We would like to urge the Southern African Governments, in particular Botswana, South Africa and Namibia to hold proper continuous dialogue and consultation with the San on issues affecting our lands and livelihoods, particularly in relation to development projects, extractive industries and the commercial farming sector;

3. That African Governments honour the rights of the san as embodied in the UNDRIP, particularly as these relate to our lands;
4. In relation to food security, we call for programs aimed at promoting food security, taking into consideration diverse programs aimed at enhancing the availability of high quality food and water at the individual, household, community, and regional levels. Livelihood support programs should include food and cash benefits for individuals in need, including those who are the most vulnerable. Consideration must be given the impacts of local, regional, and global climate change and ways to mitigate these impacts, with an eye toward reducing risk for local people. Thank you.