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**INTERVENTION AT THE 23<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE  
WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS IN  
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND BY WEST AFRICA  
COALITION FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE S' RIGHTS  
(WACIPR)**

The Chair,

The theme of the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the working group on indigenous populations focusing on the domestic and the international protection of indigenous traditional knowledge is very relevant to the situation of indigenous communities in Nigeria.

As a prelude Mr. Chair, the indigenous communities in Nigeria are mainly the minority tribes, which have their own heritage to preserve and bequeath to future generations. What is the situation now? The cherished values and cultural heritage of the minority tribes are systematically being eroded. The languages of the three dominant groups are the recognized languages in the country. The languages of the minorities are largely suppressed and not given official encouragement. Minority children start their education in language of instruction that is not their mother tongue. The adverse effect of this is that the children only interact with their environment and imbibe their culture in so far as the language they acquire can give them expression.

Mr. Chair, the cultural heritage of the indigenous minorities is heading for extinction.

Another aspect is the documentation of traditional herbal pharmacopoeia. The age-long knowledge of herbal medicine is only passed on from one generation to the other by individual families. In the process, many efficacious herbs are lost and cannot longer be identified because they are not on records.

Mr. Chair, thank you for listening so far but I would like to suggest the following solution;

1. Education of the children of minorities should include expressions in their mother tongue.
2. The licensing fees for the electronic media should be slashed or totally removed to encourage the establishment of community radio that could produce programmes that suit the minorities.

Mr. Chair, I thank you very much for listening to me.

DORA OGBOU (Mrs.)  
EMMANUEL ANOKHUEHI

WEST AFRICA COALITION FOR  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHT  
(WACIPR)