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Sub-Commission on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights
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Agenda item 4 : Review of developments

c) Indigenous peoples and conflict prevention and resolution

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Brothers and sisters!

My name is Timur Kalishev, and I represent an Indigenous Siberian people of the Bachat Teleuts. I am the director of two independent public organizations of the Teleut people -- Regional Public Organisation of the Teleut People "NABAT" and Teleut National Cultural Centre "Tazyldar".

I will briefly explain the situation and problems of my people. Perhaps, nothing I can tell you will be new to you, because all Indigenous Peoples will find much in common with our situation.

The Teleuts descended from the Tele, ancient pastoralists nomadic tribes, and are a numerically small people with a language of the Turkic family; they inhabit the Kemerovo Region. Their history spans more than two thousand years.

Our people live in an industrial region of Russia, the Kemerovo Region, in areas of industrial production and open-pit coal mining of coal; they experience an overwhelming social and technological pressure.

Despite being surrounded by giants of the coal, metallurgy and chemical industries and being so numerically small, we have not given in to the processes of assimilation and, to a considerable degree, have preserved our national identity, our native language and the wealth of our spiritual and material cultures.

At this time, the situation of our people can still be described as critical. The gravity of the situation is complicated by the recently adopted juridical standards – the Land, Water and Forest Codes – permitting purchase and sale of land, water and forests.

One of the ways out of the present situation, as the Teleuts see it, is the registration of shares of land for private ownership. However, they do not have the means necessary for the process of application and registration of their land. And because there are coal deposits in our land, it is quite clear why no one is going to give our land back to us just like that.

Our land can be bought up by others, and it is being bought up by rich people and organizations. We cannot even resist it.

This is a catastrophe – we can not engage in our traditional economies on our own land, because most of our lands are being used for strip mining and slag heaps. They extract

coal from our land, and then bury our land under waste rock; they pollute our river, and jeopardize our sacred objects such as holy mountains and springs. Because of the contamination of the environment, humans and livestock contract diseases, mainly cancerous ones.

Rapid disappearance of our culture and language is also cause for concern. The older generations are departing before they can pass their knowledge on to the younger ones.

This is a general review of our people's situation, and everything I have said is supported by the information published on the Teleut Internet site www.turgar.ru. The site was created by our organization to ensure the availability of information on Teleut social and economic problems to the global community, and to ensure the preservation of our culture for our next generations.

The catastrophe in which our people finds itself today calls for immediate solutions, and this is why Teleut public organizations appeal to the United Nations, the UN Voluntary Fund, the representatives of international funds: help us, consider our people and our problems, do not let the Second Decade of Indigenous Peoples be our last.

What will become of us, if, against our will, we lose our native land?

This situation can be controlled by implementing international grant projects to secure the Teleuts' land for them, and to immediately collect and preserve our people's culture for the next generations of Teleuts.

Teleut public organizations already have some experience of implementing international projects, documented by international auditors. We are ready to work together and implement joint projects for the good of Indigenous Peoples.

Timur Kalishev