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**Structural
Analysis of
Cultural
Systems**

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Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
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Statement on Item 5

The role of languages and culture in the promotion and protection of the rights and identity of indigenous peoples

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on the present study. As it profoundly covers the issue, I would like to only briefly comment and highlight some points from a research perspective. It is especially the visual culture, which is the most relevant manifestation of identity, next to language. If we look at the relation of indigenous peoples and their non-indigenous contexts, then the mutual knowledge, both of the others' language and of their visual culture is not problematic, but rather, the dominance of the external culture is a problem. Especially the younger indigenous generations try to escape this dominance pressure by adopting external language, lifestyle and self-presentation. But this loss of the traditional cultural elements results in a loss of indigenous identity, which then leads up to the deterioration of the indigenous culture, as language and visual culture are not passed on, the younger don't use them anymore, and when the elders die, the knowledge is lost. With regard the maintenance of indigenous language, culture, and identity, we can recommend, from a scientific point of view, that the indigenous language be defined as the official language for inhabitants of indigenous territories, and that the use of the traditional visual culture be made compulsory, without compromise, for both the inhabitants and visitors. This territorial assignment of language and visual culture safeguards the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, especially Art. 8 and Art. 31, as well as Human Rights in general, as equal rights are applied to all inside the indigenous territory. This recommended protection policy prevents the destabilising influx of external, dominant cultural elements, and it ensures that the indigenous culture is respected, which is the prerequisite for cultural self-confidence, and thus identity, of indigenous peoples.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman