

12th Session Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Geneva, 15-19 July 2019

Item 9: Future work of the Expert Mechanism, including focus of future thematic studies.

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Thank you all for sharing this space with me. My name is Sarah Taitano and I am indigenous to the Palauan, Chamoru & Yapese communities of the Pacific. I am currently living on the island of Guam. And I come before this body as a representative of my indigenous peers and our children who live on Guam and the rest of Oceania.

I remind you that in the context of a post-colonial world, Guam remains a colony; a non-self governing territory of the USA. In this moment, Guam's ancestral lands are being transformed into live-fire training ranges for US military war simulation despite indigenous outcry and local domestic legislative efforts. In Guam and Oceania, we are living in modern day conflict zones and we are faces of climate change. But today, I decided not to make points that are being made over and over again every year with the UN bodies. For the past few days this week, it has been clear that there is only one point—and that point is that there are only two mindsets. 1, is an indigenous consciousness and the 2nd is a colonized collective. The indigenous consciousness by principle is built on harmony with the Earth, while the colonized perspective is built against her. To be indigenous means we understand that there is no room for conflict to achieve peace, and that debating about morality is a waste of time that we don't have. Our indigenous ways of life have ensured our people would not find ourselves in crises at the last minute, and having to come up with SDGs to save ourselves. But it is the 21st century & we already know enough about how indigenous peoples (IP) are at the forefront of issues that have come with colonization, while we have been the first to be left behind. Decolonization is not truly over if indigenous people are still indirectly denied the rights of: consent, full implementation of the UN Charter and DRIP; while we need accreditation and definition to participate and represent ourselves as indigenous here at the UN. I don't want to believe this illusion of inclusion of IP in the UN will continue any longer. Regardless of adversity, IP still carry the universal answers to global peace, security and progress that the UN was built for.

So when it comes to future work, I recommend EMRIP:

- Cultivates sustainable permanent channels and spaces for IP to participate in all UN mechanisms without eligibility requirements to ensure UN can have authentic liaison to first hand progress of communities.
- focuses on decolonization efforts with territories that bridge with other UN mechanisms.
- Conducts a thematic study on indigenous peoples living in decolonizing territories, specifically, Guam, to support self-determination efforts considering our administering power recently exited the HRC.
- upholds the UN as a whole to live up to the standards and principles historically set forth in the Charter of The United Nations by supporting the transformation of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and UNDRIP into ratifiable conventions so that morality is binding & not a choice.

To conclude, my deepest gratitude to OHCHR's Indigenous Fellowship Programme for bringing me here to the United Nations to understand that we are truly in this together.

Sulang & Mina'ase'