



**SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL STATEMENT TO THE
16TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON
INDIGENOUS ISSUES (UNPFII),
DELIVERED BY THE
DEPUTY MINISTER OF COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL
AFFAIRS, MR OBED BAPELA
27 APRIL 2017,
NEW YORK**

Agenda Item 4: "Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Issues"

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Madame Chair,

Since the advent of Constitutional Democracy in South Africa in 1994 and the country's subsequent return to the community of nations in 1995, the South African Government has always placed special emphasis on the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights including the Right to Development.

Inspired by this vision, the Government of the Republic of South Africa has registered progress in a mere two decades in terms of delivery of essential services to the previously disadvantaged masses of our country. Services inclusive of health, education, housing, infrastructure development, rural development became the preoccupation of the Government within the first two decades of governance.

For the purposes of this statement and in the context of the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the rights of Indigenous communities in South Africa, this statement shall focus on health and culture.

Prior to 1994, South Africa had a fragmented health system designed along racial lines. Today, the Constitution has outlawed any form of racial discrimination and guarantees the principles of socio-economic rights including the right to health. A new single de-racialised public health system was born at national, provincial and local levels to provide a comprehensive health care system aimed at improving quality, equitable access, efficiency and effectiveness of the health system. Access to primary health care services, measured in terms of visits per year, increased from 67 million in 1998 to 129 million by December 2014.

South Africa has embarked on protecting traditional medicine in an effort to ensure the promotion of the right of indigenous communities to their traditional medicines and health practices which include the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals.

As alluded in our statement to the General Assembly plenary, there are several initiatives being undertaken by the Government in consultation with the Khoi-San communities aimed at addressing in a comprehensive manner all pertinent issues affecting their cultural rights.

The Government of South Africa unveiled a memorial for one of the unsung heroines Mrs Magrieta Jantjies who was a Khoisan, and one of the last to speak the N!uu language fluently, she is being honored for her role in promoting the N!uu language which is listed as one of the critically endangered languages in the world by UNESCO.

Furthermore, as a measure to redress the history of those erased from South African history, work is in progress on the Khoi-San Heritage Route to develop an online map that will provide information on Khoi-San Heritage Sites.

In taking action to inspire change through language matters, the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) in July 2016 distributed 67 indigenous dictionaries (which includes all other indigenous groupings) to various schools in the country with the aim of promoting, preserving and protecting multilingualism in the country.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems have been a cross cutting theme across the Government underpinned by South Africa's commitment to mainstream Indigenous Knowledge Systems. In this regard, the Indigenous Knowledge Systems are contributing towards sustainable economic development in the country and advancing its scientific competitive advantage.

During Heritage Month in September, South Africa annually hosts Indigenous games aimed at showcasing the country's diverse citizens as well as reflect on the games' rich history and influence on shaping the daily and future interactions of culture. This is in line with the National Development Plan's vision of 2030 of driving social cohesion and nation-building through sporting platforms which drive active citizenry participation in sporting codes whose origins are rooted in South Africa's rich history, heritage and culture.

Also, the month of September is dedicated to display and portray our cultural pride as communities will arrange cultural events which include music, dance, traditional meals and attires also the use of language which dominate radio and television platforms.

The South African Government has a commitment to ensure implementation of all the recommendations of this Permanent Forum made over the years. We are pleased that the majority of these recommendations focus on the economic, social

and cultural rights and are, broadly, in tandem with our National Development Plan which is a blueprint for ensuring sustainable development.

I thank you!