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REHOBOTH BASTER
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- NAMIBIA -

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Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Geneva, Switzerland: 10 – 14 August 2009

11-8-2009

Agenda Item 3: Study on the right to education

Intervention by dr. Yvo Peeters, international legal counsel to the paramount chief (kaptein) of Rehoboth (Namibia).

Madam Chairperson,

I take the floor on behalf of Rehoboth Community of Namibia, a founding member of AIPACC.

This small Afrikaans speaking people numbering 35.000 persons is of mixed Khoi descendency. Since the UN monitored the Independence of Namibia in 1990 our people has systematically been spoliated of all its economic, natural and personal resources and the self governing traditional institutions are permanently undermined or at best ignored. Until 1990 Rehoboth had a well-developed education system and a high degree of literacy. Since independence and in contradiction to the relevant articles of the constitution, the Rehoboth people are denied education in their mother tongue. Therefore we have to express strong reservations to paragraph 74 and 77 of your study on education as pertaining to the situation in Namibia in general and Rehoboth in particular.

However, serious this discrimination in education might be, language as the medium of instruction is not the only relevant aspect, because next to form, content is as important. Through introduction of so-called national curricula the Rehoboth are prohibited to teach their own history and transmit their own value system to their children.

Indigenous peoples should therefore have the right to develop their own curricula inclusive of all aspects pertaining to their history, territory, identity and traditional knowledge. This includes the control over the drafting and production of the didactic and pedagogical material.

To furthermore ensure qualitative education, the training of the teachers themselves is also very important. The availability of teachers colleges is thus a essential element to secure a community based educational system adequate for small indigenous peoples such as Rehoboth.

Thank you for your attention,

Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (membership)

Founding member of the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC)

International Legal Counsel: Dr. Y.J.D. Peeters