

Review of the activities of the United Nations System: theme: *Human Rights*

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1. Overview:

Mr. Chairman,

The situation of different Indigenous Peoples in Africa is diverse, complex and it varies from country to country and from one community to another. A combination of bad policies and denial of human rights have made lives of Indigenous Peoples in different parts of Africa unbearable.

Increased trends in the utilisation of forest products, mining extraction, charcoal burning and expansion of areas under crop production have had a negative impact on the livelihoods of indigenous pastoralist and hunter-gatherer communities in Africa. They have all resulted in loss of grazing and alienation of permanent water sources, establishment of protected areas and commercial as well as sport hunting, all these forms of land use have all increased competition over natural resources that are critical for survival of both pastoral and hunter-gatherer communities.

hunter-gatherers

The plight of the Hunter-Gatherers communities such as the San in Southern Africa, the Batwa in Rwanda and Burundi, the Hadzabe and Ndorobo in Tanzania, the Ogiek in Kenya, the Baswa, Bagyeri, Baka and Mbuti of Central Africa, is well known throughout the world and it has reached alarming levels.

The banning of subsistence hunting in most African countries is a direct denial of the basic right to life. This has negatively affected hunter-gatherer communities whose livelihoods are dependent on game resources, wild berries and honey. Whereas subsistence hunting, a lifeline for Indigenous hunter-gatherers communities is outlawed, sport/commercial hunting is not only allowed but encouraged in the same territories. Removing some Indigenous hunter-gatherer communities from their traditional forest territories in order to establish protected areas has displaced Indigenous Peoples and this has made them vulnerable and unable to cope with environmental uncertainty.

pastoralist

Similarly, the same is true about the pastoralist communities in Eastern Africa. Communities such as the Maasai and the Barbaig in Tanzania, the Samburu, Maasai, Turkana, Rendille and the Borana in Kenya, the Afar and other herding communities in Ethiopia, have all experienced systematic alienation of key pastoral resources to other uses such as national parks, large scale farming and resettlements.

The Touaregs in Bukina Faso, Mali, Niger, Algeria and Libya and are all faced with the same problems as the other pastoralists in Eastern Africa.

The Ogoni in West Africa

The Ogoni people of Nigeria, have for instance been denied rights to the rich oil resources found on their land and they have found themselves extremely vulnerable.

The principle of the sanctity of borders is used by all the nation states to deny nomadic communities the right to associate with their kins who find themselves in different nation states. In some cases, trekking of resources is constrained by borders of nation states.

The Amazigh in North Africa

The Amazigh people of North Africa found in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt are denied the right to use their own language and use of indigenous names. The constitutions of these countries deny them the right to be different and preserve their lands, identities, languages and cultures.

Contrary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that all peoples have the right to life, liberty and security (article 3), Indigenous Peoples in Africa are denied such basic rights. Hunter-gatherer communities such as the Batwa in central Africa, the Ojiek and Hadzabe in East Africa are threatened with extinction. In Tanzania, for example it is estimated the current total population of the Hadzabe is less than 1,500. The situation of the Batwa is equally alarming.

Alienation of Ips key resources is a serious violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 17 (1&2) which states clearly that every peoples have the right to property either alone or in association with others).

Recommendations

We ask the Permanent Forum to advise ECOSOC to urge the African governments to take special measures to protect social, cultural, economic and religious rights of the Indigenous Peoples.

We further call upon the Permanent Forum to support the African Commission for human and Peoples Rights' working group on Indigenous Peoples Issues in Africa and advise on how to promote the situation of human rights among the Indigenous peoples in Africa.

We recommend that mechanisms should be established to ensure active, full and conscious participation of Indigenous Peoples representatives in issues that affect them.

We also ask the Permanent Forum to work closely with the Special Rapporteur for Indigenous Affairs in developing the focus of issues related to Indigenous Peoples in Africa and Asia.

Finally, we ask the PF to advise ECOSOC to urge all governments in Africa to recognize all languages in their constitutions as a first step and to take the necessary measures to protect cultural and linguistic identities of minorities and indigenous peoples.