

**Forced Evictions of the Sengwer and other Forest  
Indigenous Peoples in Kenya**

Presentation by

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**Mr. Chair**

**Experts and my Indigenous brothers and sisters,**

The Sustainable Development Goals as they are have a lot to do with the indigenous peoples rights to health since we suffer the effects of discriminations in education, gender, justice, economic issues etc.

Goal No. 15-Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss. Most activities that are aimed at achieving this goal will have to be implemented on indigenous peoples territories, this gives enough reasons to consider their rights and to help avoid repetition of violations of the same rights. It is evident that mismanagement of forest and loss of biodiversity has been caused by activities from our states, business like logging and mining which have deprived many indigenous peoples their rights to enjoy their environment and the natural resources which affect our health psychologically, physically and physically.

The mechanism chosen by states on forest management has instead become a mechanism to violation of forest indigenous peoples. For example, the Government of Kenya has been forcefully evicting the Sengwer from their ancestral land in Embobut forest for more than 20 times now, the Ogiek Indigenous Peoples have been the recent

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community to be evicted from Mau and Mt. Elgon forests. These evictions are characterized by destruction of property and psychological trauma especially to women and children who are more vulnerable to the drastic effects of these evictions. The nature of these evictions clearly makes it difficult for such communities to fight poverty, access education, access health services, fight hunger, ensure gender equity and women empowerment etc.

We have been the custodians of these forests even before the establishment of current states and their modern policies of forest management. We lived in harmony with nature until the state made our neighboring communities, logging companies and other forest encroachers that the forests are not really ours, giving them economic and political power to exploit our forests. This resulted to our current cry on forest destruction, desertification and loss of biodiversity which all connects to the “big issue” climate change.

“KICKING US OUT OF OUR INDIGENOUS FORESTS IS NOT SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT” Evictions deny us right to pass on indigenous knowledge on medicines, they deny us time with our healthy environment, exposure indigenous women to vulnerabilities and psychological trauma.

I will conclude by saying that there is great need for:

- The United Nations agencies like UNEP to give advice to member state

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on a desired method for sustainable management of forests that will ensure respect for the rights of forest indigenous peoples.

-Indigenous peoples and indigenous organizations to push for co-management of forests between the peoples and the government agencies.

-All of us to realize that women are the primary custodians of indigenous knowledge and they are the ones who introduce us to nature. Let us ensure women are empowered and are given equal chances to contribute on issues related to climate change and forest management.

-It's about time for states to integrate Indigenous Knowledge in forest management and also in the mainstream medical care systems other than considering them barbaric; we have survived on traditional medicine almost all our lives.

**Thanks**