

**STATEMENT OF MAA DEVELOPMENT  
ASSOCIATION TO THE 15th SESSION OF THE  
WORKING GROUP OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN  
GENEVA - BY MR. VINCENT M OLE NTEKEREI**

**28.07.97.**

**CONCEPT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. AGENDA ITEM N° 4.**

**MADAM CHAIR,**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND NATIONS,**

**THE THOUGHT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES SENDS JITTERS DOWN THE SPINES OF MANY NATION-STATES LEADERSHIPS AND NO WONDER. WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES STRONG CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS, AMIDST TRANSFORMING MAINSTREAM SOCIETIES AND COMMUNITIES, ALL CHANGING TO ADAPT AND ADOPT AND WESTERNISE, THERE IS INHERENT FEAR WITHIN THE NATION-STATE GOVERNMENTS THAT IN MOST CASES THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ARE HEADED THE SECESSION WAY.**

**THIS MAY BE SO, WERE THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE NATION-STATES AND THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES BE A LONG AND PROTRACTED WAR OF RECOGNITION AND ONE OF ATTRITION. THE LONGER THE STRUGGLE, THE BITTER IT BECOMES SO THAT IN THE END, THE COSTS OF NON-RECOGNITION BECOME PROHIBITIVE TO THE STATE GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED TO MAINTAIN THEIR STRANGLE-HOLD ON THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN THEIR COUNTRIES.**

**MADAM CHAIR,**

**INDIGENOUS PEOPLE HAVE THROUGH TIME EVOLVED THEIR CULTURE TO VERY REFINED, ALBEIT APPARENTLY BACKWARD MODES OF LIFE COMPARED TO HYBRIDISED MODERN ECONOMICALLY, PLANNED AND DESIGNED MODELS OF PRODUCTION REGIMENTED HUMAN LIVING. WHERE INDUSTRY DICTATES, IN THE SIDELINES, THE POLITICAL DESTINY OF A COUNTRY'S POPULACE; WHAT THEY CAN DO, WEAR, BEHAVE, WORK, LIVE, HOSPITAL TO OR NOT TO ATTEND, SCHOOLS TO OR NOT TO ATTEND AND WHAT-HAVE-YOU.**

**MADAM CHAIR,**

**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HAD EVOLVED DYNAMIC MODES OF LIVES FOR THEIR PEOPLES DEMOCRATICALLY THROUGH OPEN PUBLIC FORA AND MEETINGS AND CRYSTALLISED SOME BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS INCLUDING FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, RIGHTS OF CHILDREN, RIGHTS OF WOMEN ETC WITH ACCOMPANYING RESPONSIBILITIES TO THOSE STIPULATED RIGHTS. THE ONLY PROBLEM IS; THESE WERE NOT WRITTEN DOWN IN MANY INSTANCES.**

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DID HAVE VERY ELABORATE MODES OF SELF-GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, RESILIENT CULTURES, ECONOMIES, HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SECURITY SYSTEMS AS WELL AS BROAD-BASED LAWS THAT WERE EXHAUSTIVELY DEBATED UPON IN OPEN PUBLIC FORA AND NOT THROUGH INDIRECT REPRESENTATION. IN SHORT, EVERYONE PLAYED PART IN FORMATION OF LAWS TO GOVERN HIM OR HER. NOT SO ANY MORE. AS A CONCEPT DEMOCRACY NEEDS RE-INTERPRETATION, BUT DEFINITELY NOT BY ONE PARTY ALONE. ALONE, OR EVEN WITH THEIR SUPPORTERS.

MADAM CHAIR,

WERE ALL THESE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HERE TODAY RECOGNISED AND THEY REMOVE THE SUPERIMPOSED NATION-STATE HOLD ON THEM AND THEIR LANDS, THEY ARE QUITE COMFORTABLY ABLE TO LIVE AND REGAIN THEIR IDENTITY AND DIGNITY THEY HAD SINCE LOST AFTER IMPOSITION OF FOREIGN VALUES OVER THEIR OWN.

WE BELIEVE, MADAM CHAIR, THAT THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM SHOULD PLAY CRUCIAL ROLE TO THE EMANCIPATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS.

- RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AS PEOPLES AND NOT AS PEOPLE, POPULATIONS, MINORITIES WITHOUT WHICH EMANCIPATION OUR MARGINALIZATION WILL CONTINUE TO LORD ON US ENDLESSLY.
- RECOGNISE THAT WITH CURRENT MARGINALIZATION, THERE IS NEVER GOING TO BE ANY RAY OF HOPE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES TO LIVE IN FREEDOM, DIGNITY AND IDENTITY. THESE WILL ALWAYS REMAIN SUB-HUMAN, SUB-SPECIES OF A PEOPLES TO WHOM THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF RIGHTS DOES NOT ALWAYS APPLY.
- THROUGH THE CURRENT DRAFT DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IS A BASIC STATEMENT OF THOSE PROPOSED RIGHTS IS VERY MINIMUM ACCORDING TO THE U.N. CHARTER ON UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED RIGHTS, IT IS NEVERTHELESS SOMETHING TO START WITH AND NO FEAR OF BALKANISATION OF CURRENT STATES NEEDS BE ANTICIPATED WITH COOPERATION FROM THE STATES AND SPEEDY ADOPTION OF THE DECLARATION.
- THAT THE U.N. TRAINS INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN LOBBYING, LAW EDUCATION AND DIPLOMACY TO ENABLE THEM TO ENTER INTO NEGOCIATIONS WITH STATE GOVERNMENTS WHO NOW ENJOY AND ENJOYED UNDUE EDUCATION HEAD-START OVER INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.
- ENCOURAGE PARTICULARLY AFRICAN AND ASIAN GOVERNMENTS TO ENTER INTO NEGOCIATIONS WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. WE MAY AGREE THAT BOTH CONTINENTS HAD INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AT THE

TURN OF LAST CENTURY BUT NOT ANY LONGER. THEIR MAINSTREAM SOCIETIES AND COMMUNITIES HAVE SINCE LOST THEIR INDIGINEITY AFTER TRANSFORMATION TO MODERN LIFE DISCARDING WHAT WAS FORMERLY TRULY INDIGENOUS OF THEM.

- SELF-IDENTIFICATION SHOULD STILL FORM THE RATIONAL, CRITICAL AND LOGICAL BASIS FOR THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES LEST GOVERNEMENTS CONTINUE TO CALL SOME INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: NAMES LIKE "INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PROPER", "INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MINUS "SINCE THESE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ARE NOW SO CALLED AND CLASSIFIED BY THEIR GOVERNMENTS WHAT DO THESE SAME PEOPLES IDENTIFY AND CALL THEMSELVES? RUNAWAY DEFINITIONS BY NATION-STATES GOVERNMENTS MAY BE GOOD SEMANTICS BUT OF LITTLE HELP TO THE REALIZATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WORLD WIDE.
  
- ILO CONVENTION 169 SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE THE OPERATIVE FORMAL DEFINITION. SCIENTIFIC DEFINITIONS OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS CAN ONLY LIMIT THE SAME RIGHTS THAT THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO ELABORATE/PROVIDE/PROTECT. STRICT DEFINITIONS DEMANDED BY SOME GOVERNMENT DELEGATIONS IS A PROCESS IMPEDING PEACEFUL PROGRESS IN ADOPTION AND RATIFICATION OF THE DRAFT DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. THANK YOU MADAM CHAIR.