

Third Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Agenda Item 4(d) – Human Rights
Xx May 2004

Statement and Recommendation of the Association of Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname, to the Third Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Mr. Chairman, my name is Jacqueline Jubithana and I work for the Association of Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname. This organization represents the traditional authorities of all 37 indigenous villages in Suriname. I am making this statement on behalf of my organization.

In March 2003, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination issued Decision 3(62) under its Urgent Action procedure, which stated that “serious violations of the rights of indigenous communities ... are being committed in Suriname,” particularly of their rights to lands and resources.

In March 2004, the Committee issued Concluding Observations after reviewing a report submitted by the government. Among others, the Committee recommended that Suriname take urgent action to legally recognize the rights of indigenous peoples to own and control our traditional lands and territories, and that Suriname requests the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to draft a framework law on the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples.

Also in March 2004, the UN Human Rights Committee concluded that our rights to lands and resources are not recognized and that these rights are routinely violated in practice. The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples reached the same conclusion in his 2002 report.

Mr. Chairman, I am sad to say that the government has yet to take any steps to comply with and implement the important recommendations issued by these eminent UN human rights bodies and Suriname remains the only state in the Americas that has failed in any

way to legally recognize and guarantee indigenous peoples' land and resource rights. This is the case even though the indigenous and tribal peoples of Suriname have been demanding recognition of our land rights for over 30 years and despite a commitment to address land rights made in a Peace Accord that ended a six year-long civil war in 1992.

We are greatly concerned that Suriname will continue to disregard the Racial Discrimination Committee's recommendations and for this reason we are seeking the assistance of the Permanent Forum.

Mr. Chairman, my recommendations to the Permanent Forum therefore are as follows:

1. That the Permanent Forum recommends in its report of this session that the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination use the follow-up procedure provided for by Rule 65 of its Rules of Procedure¹ to continue and intensify its dialogue with Suriname with the objective of ensuring that its March 2004 Concluding Observations are implemented.
2. That the Permanent Forum specifically requests that the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights contacts the Government of Suriname and indigenous peoples' organizations to offer its assistance to draft framework legislation on the rights of indigenous peoples.

Thank you.

¹ Rule 65: If the Committee decides to request an additional report or further information from a State party under the provisions of article 9, paragraph 1, of the Convention, it may indicate the manner as well as the time within which such additional report or further information shall be supplied and shall transmit its decision to the Secretary-General for communication, within two weeks, to the State party concerned.