

20TH SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

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Mr Chairman, Government delegates, NGOs ^{& UN Agencies} representatives, Brothers and Sisters of the Indigenous peoples:

I take this opportunity to first thank the Almighty God for having given us the chance to be here today. Secondly, my regards are expressed to the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples for enabling our organisation to be represented in this session.

Mr Chairman, I also congratulate you for having been elected to the chair.

Indigenous peoples in many parts of the world have continued to be denied of their inalienable right to self-development. In fact, even recognition of their very existence is to date denied to them. Long after independence, Governments have continued to trample on these rights to the extent that the indigenous people have continued to live in abject poverty.

Among the Samburu of northern Kenya, no meaningful development has taken place. No new schools and Healthcare centres have been put in place despite tourism being the major industry. Facilities are decaying while essential equipment in schools and healthcare centres are lacking. Coupled with laxity in the civil service, most institutions have been run down. I cannot mention about the infrastructure, leave alone pastoralism and marketing of livestock and its products, the mainstay of the community's economy!

Corruption has been cited to be the main cause of underdevelopment in Samburu. A claim which holds true. Most of the Government employees are non local. They have no development agenda but to loot the district treasury. Capacity building and employment to the local people is not given priority. Moreover, resources allocated from the central government are not adequate, and more often, as is claimed, are used to counter rampant insecurity! This is not palatable.

Local administration officials- The chiefs, are appointed by the Government. These are impositions against the peoples will. They are therefore not respected, rejected, misfits, inefficient, incapable and ineffective. They cannot therefore be development catalysts.

The Government without consultation and thus benefits alienated large tracts of Samburu ancestral land. Over 350 square kms was set aside for conservation. The area now boost 4 tourist lodges! 30% of forest coverage in the country lies in Samburu District, while over 130,000 Ha of prime dry season grazing ^{land} was gazetted as military training area, where over 200 people, adults and children, were either maimed or killed by unexploded military ordinance (UXO) left behind by the practising British Army- This has been a subject of the recently arrived at out of court settlement where the victims were awarded stg £4.5million in form of compensation. This is yet not enough!

Community involvement and participation in development affecting them is crucial. Consultation and obtaining their prior free, voluntary and informed consent is the only viable answer. Among others, the fundamental points need be noted: ^{& following}

- Elected leaders need to replace administration appointees
- Traditional institutions to be restored , empowered and work alongside elected leaders.
- Alienations of land be brought back to the negotiation table for purposes of compensation and obtaining of prior free, voluntary and informed consent.
- Adequate resources be allocated and local people be trained and employed to control and manage them.

In whole, the current ongoing Constitutional review will take these into consideration.

During meetings on World Bank and EU policies on indigenous people held in Arusha Tanzania and Brussels, Belgium respectively, one of the suggestions given was that " Any proposal for funding on indigenous peoples land and / or for indigenous peoples, by the Governments or non-indigenous organisations should embody the "INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PLAN" which require to be undertaken/confirmed by an indigenous organisation.

Mr chairman, it is still my conviction that this suggestion equally applies to similar proposals to the UN Agencies.

Thank you Mr chairman.

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