

Structural
Analysis of
Cultural
Systems

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Name of Speaker: Dr. Arnold GROH
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Indigenous Peoples' Rights with Respect to their Cultural Heritage

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

For giving me the opportunity to contribute some research aspects that are relevant to the *Study on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with Respect to their Cultural Heritage*. Indigenous Peoples' cultural heritage is especially addressed in Article 31 of the Declaration, but with regard to practice, Article 11 is of particular importance, as it grants Indigenous Peoples the right to practise and also revitalise their cultural traditions and customs. However, the exercise of this right is very much impeded by the reality of globalisation, which puts enormous pressure on Indigenous Peoples. In everyday life, they are exposed to the cultural dominance of the globalised context, so that indigenous persons of all ages are often ashamed of their cultural background and sometimes even deny it. This is not a good situation for practising the rights that are granted in Article 11 and also in Article 8. As a prerequisite for enabling the practising of rights regarding material and immaterial cultural heritage, it is necessary to counterbalance the pressure of the dominant culture. Some helpful steps to begin with would be to secure that Articles 14 to 16 be translated into action. Culturally specific education in the sense of Article 14 could strengthen the practising and revitalising of cultural heritage, rather than depriving the young generation of their culture, as it generally happens with imposed cultural influence. Likewise, if Articles 15 and 16 would be implemented seriously, then the appropriate reflection of indigenous culture in education and media would have positive repercussions both on the non-indigenous context and on Indigenous Peoples themselves. Non-indigenous people, if properly informed about indigenous culture would see its value and understand that the deletion of indigenous culture through globalisation is an immeasurable loss for all humankind. And Indigenous peoples themselves would have more self-esteem and confidence in their own culture. This would help them to have freedom of choice to manage the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures without submitting to the dominant culture. Tourism is an area to which cultural heritage is especially sensitive. May I mention that our organisation's Tourinfo project, aiming at culturally sustainable tourism, has been listed by UNESCO as a measure to maintain cultural diversity? Anyway, we are available for EMRIP in culture-related matters.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.