



Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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Agenda Item 9: Future work of the Expert Mechanism, including focus of next annual study

Talofa Chairperson;

Tuvalu is amongst the many Pacific island States that are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Traditionally, we have managed our environment, including the oceans, seabed and environs sustainably so as to benefit all peoples and future generations.

I do not need to reiterate the adverse impacts of climate change on our rights to exist as human beings in Tuvalu. The relationship that we have with the oceans, seabed and environs are clearly reflected in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including a right of governance. The recent devastation of our islands by category 5 Cyclone Pam in 2015 where waves swept through the whole islands, left our people in constant fear and anxious of what will be next.

Chairperson, we cannot talk about human rights while turning a blind eye to climate change. Our people in Tuvalu are forced to move further inland to ensure security and survival. But the question remains, how far we can move on such a limited land of less than 400 meters. It is our rights to land, to self-determination and most importantly to life that are likely impacted by these events. We fear that, our children and the next generation will never find a place to call home. Climate change is a crosscutting issue and far too big for us to tackle.

Mr. Chairperson,

There is no reason to suggest that we cannot continue to adapt in the future. But climate change is not the only driving force behind rising sea levels, it intensify the difficulties already faced by indigenous peoples in the Pacific and around the world, including political and economic marginalization, loss of land and resources, human rights violations, discrimination and unemployment.

Mr. Chairperson, can you imagine a country disappearing for the face of the earth for the fault of others? I am sure Mr. Chairperson, there is no one in this room is ready to watch Tuvalu submergence become a reality. What will be the future of Human Rights if we allow this to happen? For that Mr. Chairperson, Tuvalu Climate Action Network would like to propose the following recommendations for the future work of EMPRIIP:

Firstly, EMRIP to undertake additional research in the area of climate change and human rights in Tuvalu;

Lastly, EMRIP to work together with other United Nations entities, including UN-Oceans, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change amongst others through its Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Platform, and UNESCO, in addition to the International Seabed Authority, to comply with and implement the relevant articles of the United Nations Declaration (arts. 18, 27 and 32) at a minimum, so as to ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples.

Fakaftai lasi – Mr. Chairman!