

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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Item 6: Education and Culture

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Members of the Permanent Forum, Members

Mr. Chair, Members of the Permanent Forum, Member States, Indigenous People, Ladies and Gentlemen allow me to greet you all with the wise words of my People and I quote: Walk, Sit, Talk and Think like people with a goal in life. Whatever you do, think about the grassroots.

Mr. Chair, education and culture are very important issues that need your urgent attention. In my opinion, the indigenous people introduced education. Whereby, they used to teach their children how to hunt, farm and defend themselves from the wild animals. That is how education starts, so it is not a foreign subject to indigenous people.

Mr. Chair, today people look at the Nama people as stupid and crazy (used to call us Hottentot, which means stupid and crazy) because we still practice our culture and speak our language.

The big question that some used to ask is: What is Culture? My answer to this popular question is that Culture is the precious gift given by our ancestors to us as Indigenous People. If someone give you a gift, do you put it on the cupboard to get dusty? And if so, then you do not appreciate the gift that this particular person gave you. We as the Nama people appreciate, respect and practice this gift.

Mr. Chair, today the Nama language and culture are in danger at the primary and secondary schools. Slogans in the Nama language at the Nama schools have been translated into English. Nama language that was part of the curriculum has been cancelled. Cultural events were held in the past at the schools during the colonial regime, but today in the new and independent Namibia it's not happening. Although the Namibian constitution clearly states that ethnic languages and cultures should be respected, preserved and practiced, but things in practice are different. Nama teachers have been transferred to other regions because of the high passing rate in Namaland. Every year the government congratulates the Nama students for the high passing rate, but at the University level they only take 1% of the Nama students, this is heart breaking. Senior positions in the Ministry of Education and Culture is given to the ruling party members or the majority tribe.

Mr. Chair, today Nama students are now struggling due to this rapid change of things in the education system. All this leads to indigenous youth failing to speak their indigenous language fluently and prefer to speak Afrikaans and English. Indigenous youth today is shy to practice their culture.

Recommendations Permanent forum should:

1. Call for an international day of culture.
2. Work together with UNESCO to put education on the world map for the benefit of everyone including Indigenous People.

Mr. Chair, last but not least, thank you for giving me this opportunity and keep on doing the good work. Long life the Permanent Forum. Long Life

Thank You