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Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

Nobody can deny the fact that traditional knowledge is the stimulus of human cognitive evolution and development. It is the very thing that makes us human. Traditional knowledge may mean different things in different historical contexts to different peoples around the globe, yet it is the tool that we use to give meaning to ourselves in time and space. However, by traditional we do not mean simplistic or backward. This is a very complex mode of survival that shaped and reshaped the way we vision the world. Amazigh traditional knowledge is no different than others, and to Amazigh people in North Africa, land, tongue and humans are the main elements that constitute the backbone of survival.

North Africa has always been an intersection of cultural interaction since the dawn of history. The Amazigh interacted with ancient civilizations including ancient Egypt, Phoenicians, Greek, Romans, Jews, Christians and Muslims. The Amazigh contribution to world cognitive heritage is remarkable. Amazigh people embraced and welcomed all the languages and the knowledge they interacted with.

However, I am here today to represent the Amazigh traditional knowledge in Morocco and I assert that nowadays this world heritage is threatened due to the ongoing policy of marginalization and impoverishment. A policy that still hits targeted Amazigh regions since the French and Spanish military withdrawal era through land robbery and the use of fraud and illegal tricks that lead to deprive the aboriginals of their land.

As far as the native language of North Africa is concerned, Tamazight is the standardized version of the Amazigh languages. An estimated 25 to 30 million speakers of Tamazight and other Berber dialects are spread throughout the North African countries, from the Atlantic Ocean to Egypt. The recognition of Tamazight has been very meaningful, a redefinition of Moroccan identity, yet ten years after Tamazight—the language of the Amazigh was constitutionally recognized as an official language, it remains unclear how it will be incorporated into education. The Moroccan government still adheres to what I would call political schizophrenia. On behalf of Amazigh community in North Africa, we urge the United Nations to encourage the Moroccan government to make clear political decisions that would promote the Amazigh language and culture.

Thank you