

EMRIP Statement by Cindy Kobei

Thank you Chairperson, for giving me this opportunity to address the 14th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

My name is Cindy Kobei from the Indigenous Ogiek community of Kenya. I am the chair of the Ogiek Youth Council and also part of the African Indigenous Women's organization, a regional network. I will be presenting a statement on Agenda item 3 study and advice on the rights of the indigenous child under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; an Indigenous girls' perspective.

Indigenous children especially adolescent children are susceptible to a range of social and economic factors that have an impact on their human rights. They have been sidelined for many years and it is important to uphold their rights to secure the destiny of indigenous peoples all around the world.

A few of the key issues faced by Indigenous Girls in Africa are:

Poverty: Sub-Saharan Africa has risen to the top of the list of regions with extreme poverty as of 2015 and indigenous peoples account for the highest percentage of the world's poorest. This later leads to other issues such as lack of access to food, water, housing and education.

Climate change: Climate change is a deeply harmful issue not only in my community but across the world leading to drought and increased harmful cultural practices. Girls travel long distances to access water increasing their chances of being raped and face violence.

Lack of information on their rights/ No equal rights: Indigenous girls are unaware of their rights. They have not been educated on their rights because most of them are school dropouts. This later leads to low representation of indigenous girls in decision making platforms.

Indigenous girls lack access to education: In most households, educating girls is not seen as a priority. In most Indigenous communities, girls are seen as brides. They prefer educating the boy child instead of the girl who are often left at home for household chores or sold off as

brides. For indigenous girls who are in school they face discrimination and harassment. Armed conflict in other countries has contributed to high school dropouts.

Harmful cultural practices: Practices such as Female Genital Mutilation and child marriages are still prevalent in other Indigenous communities in Africa. For example, in West Africa, they still practice flattening of breasts. Female Genital Mutilation leads to early pregnancies and child marriages. These practices are harmful to the life of young Indigenous girls. This is a form of violence against indigenous girls.

Lack of access to health care facilities and reproductive health products: Hospitals are not close to where the communities live. One has to travel long distances to access the bare minimum form of healthcare. This can lead to increased child mortality rates for early pregnancies. For hospitals that are nearby they are not well equipped with doctors or medicine. Indigenous girls have no access to sexual reproductive health products such as sanitary towels.

Forced Displacement: Most indigenous communities are victims of forced displaced due to mining activities, conservation or even rehabilitation. This makes children the most affected because they leave their homes and schools. The constant displacement disorganizes their school calendar. Forced displacement often comes with conflict and destruction of property. Some children get injured and even raped during these conflicts.

Therefore, I would like to make the following recommendations to the Agenda Item Number 3:

- Member States need to invest in civic education for Indigenous girls. Girls need to be well equipped with knowledge of their rights.
- Member States should ensure that there is an implementation of the already existing laws that protect the girl and Indigenous girl against harmful cultural practices.
- Member States need to collaborate with the educational system to ensure that sanitary towels are affordable and offered to students to enable Indigenous girls to stay in school.

- Member States should ensure that there are equal opportunities for both girls and boys and ensure that they work with customary leaders to provide educational opportunities to Indigenous girls.
- Many Indigenous communities don't have schools within their communities, schools need to be brought closer to communities to reduce the distance that Indigenous girls have to travel to attend school. They should also incorporate indigenous languages in the curriculum.
- Schools should ensure that there is a monitoring body that ensures that children arrive at school and at home safely. They should also monitor at the grassroots level whether there are any dropouts to ensure progress is measurable.
- Member States and local government leaders should ensure that there is access to and quality healthcare within Indigenous communities.
- Member States need to work closely with Indigenous communities to address climate change, specifically the lack of water in Indigenous communities
- Member States need to ensure that Indigenous youth and girls have political participation and representation. The solutions of most problems are found in indigenous children who fall victim.
- Member States must integrate Indigenous knowledge to help combat climate change.
- Community leaders should ensure that there is an intergenerational knowledge exchange between the younger generation and the older generation to ensure that the culture and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples are not lost.

Thank you once again for giving me this opportunity and for also giving children and indigenous youth an opportunity to take part in this discussion.