

**Panel discussion –
Annual panel on the rights of indigenous peoples**

Speaker: Daniel Kobei

Mister Chair,

My name is Daniel Kobei, Executive Director of Ogiek Peoples' Development Program in Kenya (OPDP).

We welcome the convening of this panel on such an important and live topic.

We have observed all around the world an alarming increase in violent attacks against and criminalisation of indigenous peoples defending their rights and especially their fundamental right to their traditional lands and natural resources, including in the context of conservation.

Kenya's indigenous communities and their defenders unfortunately are not shielded from the increased violence and are subjected to the same harassment techniques and reprisals; especially the Ogiek community and their defenders. The Ogiek are indigenous peoples of Kenya from the Mau Forest Complex. For decades, we have been facing evictions from our ancestral land denying us our right to land. Since July 2020, evictions have massively escalated as well as the violence against land rights defenders, OPDP staff and myself as we have been fighting to protect the rights of the community to our traditional land and advocating relentlessly for the implementation by the government of Kenya of the 2017 African Court ruling confirming the Ogiek's right to land.

Over the past year, OPDP staff and I have received death threats from powerful individuals who own large tracts of land in Mau forest irregularly. These land grabbers are against evictions, they hire goons to threaten activists who are vocal in fighting for the Ogiek community's land rights. We reported these death threats to the police in Njoro and Nakuru, but the investigations are still on-going and no conclusion in the case has been reached to this day. This year, one of our staff member's house was burnt down, this was a targeted attack which led to massive loss of property.

We also take this opportunity to express our solidarity to you, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz and other defenders.

Thank you.