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STATEMENT ON STATUS OF THE PERMANENT FORUM
by ALFRED A. ILENRE, SEC-GEN, EMIROAF

When we talk of indigenous peoples, we talk of matters related to group freedom. Most of the violent wars conflicts in number states of the United Nations today are conflicts borne out of peoples fighting for group freedom from repressive regimes.

We the indigenous peoples of Africa will greatly welcome a Permanent Forum with its status equivalent to the status of ECOSOC or the International Court of Justice. Only a body of such ^{powers} ~~institutions~~ can protect the group, cultural and economic rights of indigenous peoples.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

ALFRED ILENRE

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STATEMENT AT THE UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
OPEN-ENDED INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP ON A
PERMANENT FORUM FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES,
GENEVA, FEBRUARY 15 - 19 1999

BY HAROLD A. ILENRE, SEC-GENERAL, EMIRIOAF Ethnic minority and Indigenous Rights Organisation of Africa (EMIROAF)

Mr. Chairman,

Your broad mindedness established within the years in ~~within~~ the United Nations system ~~as related to~~ ^{as related to} human and indigenous rights has been ~~very commendable~~ ^{very commendable}. We congratulate you on this occasion on your election as chairman of the Working Group on ~~the~~ Permanent Forum for indigenous peoples.

I represent the ethnic minority and Indigenous Rights Organisation of Africa (EMIROAF) a pan-African body dedicated to the ~~prevention~~ ^{prevention} of discrimination against ethnic minority and indigenous communities. Indigenous communities of Africa feel greatly overwhelmed with joy, Mr. Chairman of the expectations that a permanent forum for indigenous peoples, hopefully will be established in this decade of indigenous peoples.

There are ~~so~~ many strands of indigenous peoples in the various regions of the world. Governments and peoples of the world must not ^{look} only at the political and economic objectives of indigenous peoples, ^{but} must also think seriously about the social and cultural perspectives of indigenous peoples who are the first members of ~~the~~ homo sapiens on earth.

Indigenous communities in Africa have contributed to the diversification of the world's traditional knowledge.

Unfortunately, the years of colonialism and the decades of misgovernment in post independence Africa by dictators have exposed indigenous peoples to severe danger of exploitation as the so called technological development in the new nation-states continued unrestricted to invade their private habitats. Indigenous peoples have watched their ancestral homes, culture, shrines and languages which evolved over the centuries destroyed without being able to do anything about it.

An objective study of African nation-states vis-a-vis African indigenous communities, their democratic, cultural and land rights is imperative in eliminating injustice, wars, bureaucratic manipulation and harmful stereo-types when the Permanent Forum on Indigenous peoples goes full stream.

There are very few functional organisations dedicated to serving the interests of indigenous and local communities in Africa. Those in existence lack co-ordination due to limitation of resources. Actions of post independence African governments do not help matters.

Governments like the FRELIMO government of Mozambique want indigenous beliefs and myths to be destroyed and discarded to give way to the building of nation-states in Africa. This policy has been destructive to the idea of protecting African traditional knowledge, history, language, indigenous culture and values. The Permanent Forum we ~~expected~~ ^{expect} when ~~formed~~ established will provide platforms for members to share experiences on issues faced by indigenous and tribal peoples all over the world.

Emiroff demands a Permanent Forum based on special recognition for the peculiar nature of indigenous peoples and their environment. We believe the world can only become more stable in the next millennium when considerations are given to the land and human rights of indigenous communities for we can only talk of a peaceful world order in an atmosphere where the group freedom ^{and rights} of indigenous peoples is recognised and protected by the United Nations and all its agencies.

The Permanent Forum should be established at the highest level possible within the United Nations system with a status not lower than the status of the Economic and Social Council.

Thanks once again, Mr. Chairman for this opportunity to address this important forum at the United Nations

ALFRED A. KENRE,
 SECRETARY-GENERAL
 ETHNIC MINORITY RIGHTS ORGANISATION OF AFRICA
 (EMIROFF)
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