

**Joint Statement by the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and
African Indigenous Foundation for Energy and Sustainable Development (AIFES)
15th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)
UNOG, Switzerland
4th - 8th July 2022**

Item 11-Enhancing the Participation of Indigenous Peoples in the United Nations

Mr. Chairperson,

Thank you for giving me another opportunity to address this august assembly. I am Saro Legborsi Pyagbara presenting this joint statement on behalf of the *Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and African Indigenous Foundation for Energy and Sustainable Development (AIFES)*.

Mr. Chair, enhancing the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the United Nations has become critically important than ever before as humanity faces the planetary crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution. Indigenous peoples as holders of critical knowledge necessary for combating these crisis and also victims of the impact of the destruction of Mother Earth by exploiters need to participate in the decisions relating to how these global issues are being discussed and decisions taken.

Mr. Chair, it is in recognition of the above that we wish to make the following recommendations:

1. Indigenous peoples are nations on their own and have organized their societies from time immemorial. They have effective governance systems; successful ways of managing nature , have well-defined territories and have protected Mother Earth for thousands of years. For the effective participation of these nations in the activities of the United Nations, we call for the granting of *observer status* to Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations General Assembly. If the Vatican and other non-state entities can be enjoying such status, Indigenous peoples should be given the same opportunity.
2. We call for the creation of a different body for the accreditation of Indigenous affiliated organizations at the United Nations. We cannot be treated as NGOs and civil societies.
3. For effective participation of Indigenous peoples in the activities of the United Nations, we call for increased funding to Indigenous peoples funding mechanisms such as the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples. It is a fact that without the Fund, most of us will not be seated in this meeting.

4. Hosting States of United Nations activities must as a necessity lift up their visa restriction processes particularly the government of Switzerland and the United States. Their imposed conditions on visa applications are making it difficult for most Indigenous peoples to participate effectively in the activities of the United Nations. For this meeting, my colleagues were denied visa to be here even when all necessary documentations were put in place.

Mr. Chair, this matter need to be dealt with seriously if the issue of participation has to be addressed comprehensively.

Thank you.