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**THE REPORT ON TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE FOR THE
MEETING IN PANAMA**

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Question 1.

What is the most important element considered as TK by Indigenous People?

Elements considered by indigenous people in Central and West Africa as traditional knowledge: are knowledge incurring diseases of both man and animals, their relationship with their environment which supersedes any kind of explanation, code of conduct, various ways of conservation for both animals and plants, their language, rituals, initiations, religion, traditional dressing and hairstyles, their attachment to their land and animals, songs, folk laws etc. There is a great link between this indigenous people, their cultural diversity, language diversity and biological diversity. The importance of the preservation of all four is very vital if traditional knowledge is to be promoted, preserved and protected.

It is now increasingly recognised that Indigenous traditional teachings and practices have played an important role and has served as a foundation for the survival of indigenous communities not only in Africa but also elsewhere.

Their ancient relationship with the land has given the Indigenous peoples a profound knowledge of the living earth. From an Indigenous worldview, all parts of the universe are interconnected. Every living creature, whether Bird, animal, tree, plants lives according to the instruction it was giving by the creator (posey, 1999).

What is considered as traditional knowledge by the Mbororo Pastoralist first and foremost is the ‘cow’. It is at the beginning and at the end. It is difficult to describe the relationship but a Mbororo man and his cows he knows them by their names and their families, and they even talk to them and they understands each other. He can recognise what the cow wants from just a sign or Just by the cry of the cow he knows among all the cattle, which

one is crying, and the reason for its cry, be it in the middle of the night.

The second most important traditional knowledge of a Mbororo pastoralist is his code of conduct which are rules governing all their lives. It is called '*Pulaaku*' and it is from the code of conduct that the word 'Fulani', 'Peul' in French or Pullo or Polar are all different appellations of the group comes from it. If you break that code of conduct, then you are not considered as a Pullo or Mbororo.

Then you have the environment, the sahel or savannah where there is plentiful presence of water and pastures permits him grazes his cows, sheep's, horses goats asses as well as one or two dogs to and from and all its contains, that is the streams, rivers, trees, and the rich and efficient medicinal plants for both man and his animal. With their cows with whom they co-exist in perfect osmosis, their pride and joy.

They have a culture of travelling and this travelling culture make them seen by other communities as strangers. Their only communication with the outside world is solely at weekly markets to sell their milk and butter and stock up indispensable foodstuffs such as millet, salt, sugar etc governed by many powerful taboos they are seen as the bush or primitive people.

You have also their very attractive attires and manner of dressing in flashy colours (red yellow) and hair styles during market days or bigger feasts days and sing songs to loved ones and lullabies to accompany the child to sleep.

Their language, which is very distinguished from the majority communities.

The rituals during particular ceremonies where they communicate with the spirits when they get into trances and become very uncontrollable the act is called MBORI dance used for curing certain diseases as well.

What a joy to encounter these poignant nomadic people, whose customs are still ancestral, and especially exceptional at this turn of

the 21st century and to see that even in the 21st century one of the last nomadic people on our troubled planet still lives free.

Question 2.

What experience and lessons learned in policy planning and development programs on TK at local, national and international levels that can be shared?

CASE STUDY OF CAMEROON'S POLICY PLANNING AND DEVELOPEMENT PROGRAMS AT LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL.

The forest law of 1991, the forest law of 1994, and the new forestry policy of 1995 and the law of 1996 to bring about sustainable and transparent management was very unsuccessful because in all these laws, there were no policies or statements concerning the protection, promotion and preservation of traditional knowledge of Indigenous people, and there was no consultation at the local or national level with the forest dependent people.

It was not efficient and it promoted more deforestation although these policies were good as laws because, they were to promote and preserve the forest, which is a home to the pygmies (the hunter gatherers) in the East and the South of Cameroon, unfortunately because of the poor governance system, corruption and lack of transparency it therefore encourage rather more deforestation.

The community forest that was created by these laws and the taxes that the town council benefited from forest exploitation with a quota reserved for the population of the forest, (the hunter gatherers) who are approximately 30,000 went only to the Bantus and the Pygmies are not even aware of these policies.

At international level the UN, the Breton woods and the World Bank and other agencies that are now geared up to support

the forest sector in Cameroon should review what has happened in the last decade to the forest and the forest dependant people of Cameroon. Particular importance is the needed to highlight the role of forest dependant people in decision making in the Cameroon forest sector as rightly noted in the World Bank report. ‘A key determinant of poverty is inequality in the distribution of social decision power’.

I should also want to share an experience that I had in Kenya. How a maassai group in the out skirt of Nairobi created a centre for the conservation, preservation and protection of their TK. This centre is composed of a small camp (village) made up of maassai traditional huts and well equipped with local toilet facilities. It has also an exhibition room, which has all the Maassai artefacts; those that exist and those that are no longer in existence. They also have a land of about four hectares where they have planted all the medicinal plants and any useful plant be it for food or for peace all is in that garden and each plant has a plate having its traditional name, scientific name and the use of the plant.

We also in MBOSCUDA have also got the support from the World Bank to create such a centre. The project, which is still to start, will be completed by June next year and will save as exchange center. The multiplication of such centres can also encourage the governments and the international world to recognize and protect this Indigenous knowledge.

Question 3.

What are the major aspirations needs concerns that indigenous people have with regards to their traditional knowledge.

Aspiration

Most indigenous people aspire to have and own their lands or the lands on which they have been living on for centuries so as to preserve, promote and protect their traditional knowledge.

There is the need for them to have access or owned land in order for them to promote the recognition, retention and the use of traditional knowledge at all levels.

As some traditional knowledge held by indigenous communities is under threat of disappearance due to various socio-cultural and economic threats there is an urgent need to establish mechanisms to revive and sustain such Indigenous traditional knowledge using the available knowledge and skills especially those that are relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

There is also the need for the recognition of the role of the indigenous woman in the maintenance and transmission of traditional knowledge, innovation and practices on indigenous people.

Traditional knowledge should be equally valued with in the same manner as Western science and thus scientists need to collaborate through research and development in equal partnership with traditional knowledge holders, with their prior informed consent.

The right of self-determination and free prior informed consent needs to be acknowledged if indigenous people are to be empowered to protect traditional knowledge.

The holistic nature of traditional knowledge must be understood and promoted instead of its breakdown and compartmentalization into discrete components, such as traditional Environmental Knowledge, Traditional Forest Related Knowledge, or Traditional Cultural Expressions. A holistic understanding as well as coordination and harmonization among the various UN agencies and multi-lateral bodies active on Traditional Knowledge should be encouraged.

Speaking from the Mbororo pastoralist perspective only having the land and owning it is insufficient, he wants the land and his cattle's and to leave **peacefully** on this land. But which is not the case actually because the Mbororo people are being chased away in Nigeria, in Cameroon, in Central African Republic, by

their neighbours, the farmers they are also victims of armed rebels attacks in Central African Republic, Chad and Cameroon. For the pygmies will want their forest as it used to be (animals, fruits, fibbers, roots, fishes) and live **peacefully** without being harassed by their neighbours or protected parks, logging and mining companies that destroy all that their livelihood depends on.

Question 4.

Why is traditional knowledge central for indigenous people in their struggle for self-determination and control and management of their lands and natural resources?

It is central because its the essential elements that identify them as Indigenous peoples and that's the reason they are asking for self determination

It is their Traditional Knowledge that gives them their identity even physically they are different from others.

It is because of their differences culturally, their different political systems, they form a non-dominant sector of the society. and even their different physical outlook and many other things that makes them aspire for self determination as a peoples.

If they didn't possess this knowledge this unique knowledge then they wouldn't be able to aspire for self-determination because they will be like just any other people.

it is this knowledge that is the backbone of all scientific research both for animal and man which is constantly stolen from them

Although indigenous communities all over the world have always made important contributions to the society in areas like Food, Medicine, science, economy and politics all these gone largely and unrecognised and certainly un rewarded .It is only recently that the international has begun to accept that these people possess unique and invaluable knowledge about the environment, Resource management in general and biodiversity in particular.

This Traditional knowledge is central because it is an important cultural resource that guides and sustains the operation of community-base management system, especially for agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry and agro-forestry, medicine technology, and biological, physical and geographical phenomena

Question 5.

What are the emerging issues, which need to be addressed by the United Nations entities dealing with TK?

The UN agencies and other bodies dealing with traditional knowledge in the various countries should make themselves known to the indigenous peoples of the countries where they exist.

We wish that for the new decade on indigenous people that the UN voluntary fund should support micro projects for the protection, promotion and preservation of traditional knowledge at local level. For example the creation of indigenous centres at the community level for the preservation of Indigenous traditional knowledge.

Indigenous people for the past decade have developed intellectual elites in anthropology, sociology, rural development specialists, geographers, economists, lawyers etc. studies and projects meant for indigenous people should be given to these elites or indigenous associations and indigenous ngos. we are ready to furnish their curriculum vitas if the need be because we are always embarrassed that non indigenous people who have no knowledge of indigenous issues are the ones who are given this studies and they always come back to us for help.

And the UN agencies dealing with indigenous traditional knowledge should put more pressure on WIPO to accept patenting the collective indigenous knowledge which is being stolen by non indigenous persons and presented as inventions and are patented. The UN country agencies dealing with traditional knowledge should be receptive or be open to Indigenous experts, Indigenous

association or NGOs representatives who comes to them to seek for collaboration, information or assistance in a particular domain.