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DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
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**INTERNATIONAL EXPERT GROUP MEETING**  
**Indigenous Youth: Identity, challenges and hope: Articles 14, 17, 21 and 25**  
**of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**  
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## **INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN AFRICA**

### **Who are the indigenous peoples in Africa?**

As per the conceptualization of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and international mechanisms dealing with indigenous peoples' rights, indigenous peoples in Africa are generally understood as nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists and hunter/gatherers who live in situations of marginalization and discrimination. (See the "Report of the African Commission's Working Group of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities", 2005).

freedom to liberate the youth mind lies in the democratic power instilled in their mind regardless of their back ground ;their historic weakness or power but on their willingness to feel the change needed for their society to rise like a sun and set their goal on hope of people in the community who have goals written on the stars shining from our hope to the horizon of opportunities we call challenges because of luck of proper guidance i love you UN mother of democracy freedom and the worlds hope to the dreams of indigenous youth

The folks of reality begin from deep down the basement of our struggles to set our lives free, the light in our memories get switched on like a moon in the desert and soon flourish the entire work of our hands, the truth is every journey we walk is the result of this struggle we set to set free our communities, every work done is the manifestation of the power of how well and big we let it grow, its growth has no limitation just as a super natural feeling of a well drawn master piece of the paradise, however the power to let it grow lies on the same plane as much as the forces to make it stunted so we should let this not at any single time meet with the fears we have for the future because these fears eat it at a higher rate more than the fires on the Amazon

Hope is risen no mater the below challenges faced

### **CHALLENGES FACED BY THE INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN AFRICA**

#### **Lack of legislation regarding indigenous youth**

The situation of indigenous youth in Africa is extremely serious. The level of bad governance, corruption, impunity, violent conflict and poverty is in general very high on the African continent, and indigenous peoples are among the groups suffering the most. Only few African countries have so far recognized the existence of indigenous peoples. However, this situation is gradually improving and several central African countries now recognize the existence of indigenous peoples in their countries. Countries such as Uganda, Kenya and Namibia are also gradually opening up. However, widespread lack of recognition persists in all other parts of Africa.

Apart from the Republic of Congo, where the Parliament on the 30th December 2010, adopted a law for the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, no countries in Africa have legislation that provide for the protection of indigenous peoples' rights. This situation is thoroughly documented in the research report made by the ILO, ACHPR and the University of Pretoria: "Overview Report of the Research Project by the International Labour Organization and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Constitutional and Legislative Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 24 African Countries" (2009).

The Congolese law for the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples is the first of its kind in Africa, and its adoption is a historic development for indigenous peoples on the continent. Hopefully this law will be a valuable tool for improving the situation of the indigenous peoples in the Congo and a source of inspiration for other countries in Africa like Uganda to take similar initiatives.

Some promising developments are as follows: In Kenya a new constitution has been adopted which provides for considerable decentralization and recognition of historically marginalized groups to which indigenous peoples belong. A new national land policy has also been adopted in Kenya, which provides for collective land rights and de-centralized land governance structures. However, still no explicit recognition of indigenous peoples exists in Kenya. In Burundi, the constitution provides for special representation of the indigenous Batwa people in the National Assembly and the Senate, an initiative that still lacks in other African Countries like Uganda. In Cameroon, a draft law on Marginal Populations has been produced; however, this draft law does not specifically recognize indigenous peoples nor address some of their key concerns. The Central African Republic has recently, as the first country in Africa ratified the ILO Convention 169.

### **Lack of representation and participation of indigenous youth**

Indigenous peoples in Africa are often poorly represented in decision-making bodies at both local and national level and their participation in decision-making processes is very limited. The lack of representation and participation makes it very difficult for indigenous peoples to advocate their cause and determine their own future development. Most African states follow European-oriented modernization and development strategies that completely disregard indigenous traditional African sectors, the important contributions of such sectors to national economies and their need for supportive policies.

### **Discrimination against indigenous youth**

Indigenous youth in Africa are discriminated against by mainstream populations and looked down upon as backward peoples. Many stereotypes prevail that describe them as “backward”, “uncivilized” and “primitive” and as an embarrassment to modern African states. Such negative stereotyping legitimizes discrimination and marginalization of indigenous peoples by institutions of governance and dominant groups. Students in schools do not access the scholarships’ as other students from other tribes even if they score higher grades than them; they are left to lag behind simply because nature has distributed them to the marginalized societies of indigenous people, they fail to identify with their culture because it is regarded as the outdated way of life, hence they get stigmatized

### **Indigenous land dispossession**

The main problem faced by indigenous youth in Africa is land dispossession, which is caused by a number of factors such as dominating development paradigms favouring settled agriculture over other modes of production; establishment of national parks and conservation areas; natural resource extraction etc. The land dispossession undermines indigenous peoples’ livelihood systems, leads to severe impoverishment and threatens the continued existence of indigenous peoples. Legal frameworks promoting and protecting indigenous peoples’ lands are very weak or non-existing, and policies are most often negatively biased against indigenous peoples and tend to undermine rather than support their livelihoods. with AFRICA nature where by the youth who are energetic and have the potential to till the land

### **Indigenous victims of violent conflicts**

Indigenous peoples in Africa are often victims of violent conflicts. In eastern and western Africa there are numerous violent conflicts between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary farmers as well as inter-community conflicts between pastoralists themselves. These conflicts are further exacerbated by effects of climate change and increased competition over natural resources, and they lead to massive suffering, impoverishment and displacements. In countries such as Niger and Burkina Faso the situation is extreme involving organized massacres of entire villages. Indigenous peoples are also victims of abuses committed by the military and armed militia groups.

### **Indigenous youth lack access to justice**

Indigenous youth in Africa have limited access to justice and violations against their rights are often committed with impunity. Cases of violations of indigenous youth’ rights are rarely investigated by the police,

perpetrators are often not brought to justice, judicial systems are too expensive for indigenous youth and often ineffective and negatively biased against indigenous youth, and indigenous youth thus have very limited possibilities of redress. The failure of most court cases brought about by indigenous youth in Africa is an indicator of this. (See for example the book by Albert Kwokwo Barume “*Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Africa*”, IWGIA, 2010).

In sum indigenous peoples in African suffer from severe neglect, dispossession and human rights violations, and the general trend is that African states wish to assimilate them into dominant cultures and livelihoods. However, the past 10 years have also witnessed a more organized and mobilized indigenous civil society that is trying to make their voices heard and advocates their own cause. In Uganda for example, Let Us Save Uganda (LUSU) and African International Christian Ministries (AICM) are local Civil Society Organisations advocating for their cause.

### **Level of self-organization of the indigenous youth' movement**

Compared to other regions of the world, the indigenous movement – and civil society as such - is still weak in Africa, and indigenous organizations are still few and have low capacity. However, the situation is diverse and varies from region to region and country to country.

Indigenous organizations in East Africa, and in particular in Kenya, have become stronger and more vocal, and they have in collaboration with other sectors of civil society successfully managed to engage in issues of concern to them such as constitutional and policy reforms. National networks are weak but a network of pastoralists (Pastoralist Development Network of Kenya) and of hunter/gatherers and pastoralists (Pastoralists and Hunter Gatherer Ethnic Minorities Network) exist. Indigenous organizations in Tanzania are fewer and have in general less capacity than organizations in Kenya. However, there are two national indigenous peoples umbrella organizations in Tanzania (PINGOs Forum and Tanzania Pastoralist and Hunter Gatherer Organization), and organizations in Tanzania have in recent years tried to address human rights violations and influence policy reform processes.

In Central Africa indigenous organizations are in general still small and weak. Some of the most well functioning organizations are found in Burundi and Rwanda where organizations have carried out successful sensitization and advocacy work. In countries such as the DRC, the Republic of Congo, Uganda, Cameroon and Gabon, indigenous organizations and support NGOs also exist and are to varying degrees engaged in

advocacy and development work. In countries such as the Central African Republic and Chad indigenous organizations are almost non-existing.

In West Africa, the discourse of indigenous peoples is in general not known or used. There are some pastoral organizations and a regional pastoral network (Billital Maroobe); however, they are only to a limited degree integrated in the African indigenous movement.

In southern Africa, the indigenous San organizations remain small and comparatively weak. There is, however, a network of indigenous organizations in southern Africa (Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa) that coordinates and represents the interests of indigenous San peoples throughout Southern Africa.

The only existing pan African organization for indigenous peoples in Africa is the “Indigenous Peoples of African Coordinating Committee” (IPACC) which has its secretariat in South Africa and which has member organizations from all the regions of Africa.

### **Limited access to education**

The indigenous youth more especially the girls are usually discriminated against for education, they are forced into early marriages’, others are left at home to care for the young ones, work in gardens and the few lucky ones are sent to trading centers for business where they are highly marginalized, raped and are also forced into prostitution and enslavement

### **Limited access to health**

The life of the indigenous youth is in danger regarding to health, the health care system is down, youth who are forced to get married, die giving birth, and their children are malnourished as a result of either lack of knowledge concerning proper diet or lack of the recommended nutritious food. There is high spread of infectious diseases such malaria which is serious killer disease in addition to HIV AIDS, and the worst scenario being that these people are denied equal access to the medication which is freely available to other patients from other communities

The indigenous youth on top of being highly marginalized by the advantaged  
, modernised people who have taken it also to their daily way of life and

Decided to cut short the hope embedded in the skills naturally given to  
These innocent worlds source of power, in the name of helping them, these  
Advantaged multiply their advantages on the expense of these people by  
Promising the away out to the promised hope of their dreams but as away of  
Life they are only used as a step to reap from their 'misfortunate life'  
A Living example of Amutwa who acted in movie name 'AFRICA UNITED', whose hope  
Was to have his well crafted message delivered into the entire AFRICAN  
Continent for the betterment of the fellow youth, could not make it beyond  
The dreams of commercial interest of the modern people and now has a story to  
tell from riches to rags simply because he is not only ascendant of the  
BATWA but the entire community of indigenous people of the world