



Issue: Providing means to safeguard reserves of indigenous people

Forum: General Assembly 4

Position: Deputy President

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Introduction

Who are indigenous people?

As defined by the United Nations Special Rapporteur;

...those which having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.

(Martinez-Cobo, 1984)

Indigenous Peoples worldwide number between 300-500 million, occupying 20% of the world's land surface. The Indigenous People of the world are very diverse. They live in nearly all the countries, on all the continents of the world and form a spectrum of humanity, ranging from traditional hunter-gatherers and subsistence farmers to judges and lawyers. All Indigenous tribe have had problems living with colonizers. Indigenous Peoples have been killed, tortured and enslaved. Discriminating them and not considering them as part of the country has always been a problem.

Definition of Key Terms

Indigenous People: These are people in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous because of their descent from the populations which inhabited the geographical region at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present State boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.

Ethnic Identity: Ethnic identity is where an individual is viewed by themselves and by others as belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group. This individual affiliation can be influenced by racial, natal, symbolic, and cultural factors.

Tribes: A social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognized leader

Colonization: An act of colonizing, meaning to establish a body of people living in a new territory but retaining ties with the parent state.

Treaty: A contract in writing between two or more political authorities (as states or communities) formally signed by representatives duly authorized and usually ratified by the lawmaking authority of the state.

General Overview

Indigenous People are the descending root of human history. In modern day, small indigenous tribes still remain in tact. Cohabiting between these tribes and today's societies is an issue that is putting indigenous people in danger of extinction. There are multiple factors that make this issue delicate on how we decide to take action, such as: cultural believes, communication, willingness of tribes to discuss the problem. Some of these tribes have never seen the outside world and see outsiders as enemies. On the other hand some

of them are slowly integrating but maintaining their culture. In general, Indigenous Peoples are usually at the top on such underdevelopment indicators as the proportion of people in jail, unemployment rate, the illiteracy rate etc. They face discrimination both in schools and in the workplace. Sacred lands and objects are stolen from them through unjust treaties. National governments continue to refuse Indigenous Peoples the right to live in and take care of their traditional lands; they often implement policies to benefit from the lands that have supported them for centuries. In some cases, governments have even put in place policies to eradicate Indigenous Peoples, cultures, and traditions. There has always been a complete lack of respect for indigenous values, traditions and human rights, by governments.

Land & Natural Reserves

The tribes paying the brutal price of conservation. To create most of the world's 6,000 national parks and 100,000 protected places, governments had to remove or restrict the rights of tribal peoples. Conservation has changed a lot. Governments are more likely now to restrict the rights of people who live in protected areas. They ban hunting, or farming, the cutting down of trees or fishing, this is to force people to move. The 'conservation versus people' approach to protecting wildlife has worsened the lives of thousands of native people. People in reserves may not be allowed to do anything, in practice they are reducing access to resources and reducing people's ability to live in protected areas. Analysis of protected areas in Congo DRC, and other African countries found that conservation had displaced villages and led to conflict and multiple human rights abuses – animals including elephants, gorillas and chimpanzees continue to decline at alarming rates anyway. In order to make room for wildlife, tourism and industry, governments are using conservation as an excuse to push the world's most endangered people away from their homeland, in which they have lived for generations.

Diseases

Delivering disease, outside impacts on tribal health. Any infectious disease carried by foreigners to these areas are potentially fatal. Most commonly of course, simple colds can rapidly spread throughout the whole community – but more dangerously diseases like measles can be extremely destructive. When an out-of-towner arrives in a small isolated group, even if only one person is infected, they will be looked after by their family and friends who eventually will also all be infected and rapidly transmit the infection around the whole tribe. It will be a matter of days for

almost every member of the group to be infected. Some will be more sensitive than others but the elderly and small children will be particularly in danger. The main issues of a disease infecting a whole community, is that very few people will be spared and since it hits a whole community at the same time, no-one will be able to hunt or collect food and even if they do, there will be no-one to prepare it. The individuals will also have no-one to look after them or feed them, with major effects on the ability of the group to continue to survive without outside help. Currently the general health of most isolated tribes is extremely good – basically they have so little contact with groups carrying infectious disease that this is simply not a problem for them.

Racism

Racism and discrimination from the governments is a major issue. Colonization has attempted to steal their dignity and identity as indigenous peoples. For example, in Australia, Canada and the United States, one practice which has only been recognized as discriminatory and damaging in the second half of the 20th century is the forced expulsion of Native/Aboriginal children from their homes. In Australia, the practice focused on mixed-race Aboriginal children, who were forcibly removed from their parents and given to adoptive white families. These children generally grew up without the knowledge that they were in fact partially aboriginal. In the United States and Canada, native children were sent to the famous residential schools, which persisted well in the latter part of the twentieth century. Language, religion and cultural beliefs were often objects of derision. To speak native words was forbidden, and often gained physical punishment-to compel a stubborn Indian child to learn to speak well English. In its work against racism and discrimination, the United Nations first formally focused its attention on the problems of indigenous peoples.

Major Parties Involved

- **Mexico:** The Mexican nation has a pluricultural composition based originally on its indigenous peoples. Indigenous professionals, intellectuals, and political activists increasingly consciously embrace their ethnic identity and provide leadership to their communities. The Indian uprising in Chiapas in January 1994 took most people by surprise. The Zapatistas organized a rebellion from their base in Chiapas, the

southernmost Mexican state, to protest economic policies that would negatively affect Mexico's indigenous population. The insurgency later developed into a forceful political movement advocating the marginalized Indians of Mexico. At the local level, Zapatistas formed administrative structures within the villages they controlled.

- **India:** The lives of tribal peoples across India are being destroyed by tiger conservation. Communities which have coexisted with tigers for generations are threatened and bullied into giving up their land. This is illegal, and thousands of families are being left in abject squalor.
- **Brazil & Peru:** Most of tribes in Brazil and Peru are in the deep ends of the Amazon. This is the home to more uncontacted tribes than anywhere else on the planet. Where their land is intact, they are thriving. But elsewhere, oil exploration, loggers, drug-traffickers and roads are putting their lives on the line
- **Canada & USA:** Aboriginal Canadians and Americans are sometimes referred to as 'Indians'. They vary from eskimos in the north of Canada to native Hawaiians.
- **Australia & New Zealand:** Indigenous Australians and New Zealanders are the descendants of aboriginals that lived in the continent before British colonisation. Before European settlement these communities spoke 250 different languages, now 130 are left. Scientists don't know how humans got to such an isolated part of the world. They suggest that modern Aboriginal peoples are the direct descendants of migrants who left Africa up to 75,000 years ago.

Timeline of Key Events:

- 1982: creation of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations
- 1989: creation of The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention
- Thursday, 13 September 2007: The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the General Assembly

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

1. **In 1987, Sydney Possuelo** – then head of Funai's Department of Unknown Tribes decided that the current way of doing things was unacceptable. After seeing many tribes being

wiped of the map by disease, he concluded that isolated people should not be contacted at all. Instead, governments should be place natural reserves aside for them to live on, and any contact attempts should be left up to them to initiate. “Isolated people do not manifest among us – they don’t ask anything of us – they live and die mostly without our knowledge,” he says. When we do initiate contact, he says, they too often share a common fate: “desecration, disease and death.”

2. International Labour Organization Convention 169. (1989)

ILO 169 recognizes and defends tribal peoples’ land ownership rights, and sets a series of minimum UN standards regarding consultation and consent. This is the only law that can secure the rights of the Land of tribal peoples. Only twenty-two countries give stamp of approval so far.

3. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities (1992)

This statement deals with all minorities, including many of the world's indigenous peoples. The Declaration deals with both the obligations of States with respect to minorities and the rights of minorities. Topics that are dealt with include the national or ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic identity of minorities; the free expression and development of culture; association of minorities amongst themselves; participation in decisions regarding the minority; the exercise of minority rights, both individual and in groups; and education of and about minorities.

Possible Solutions

1. Stop supporting logging, mining and other extractive industries. These are the real causes of environmental destruction.
2. Stop accusing tribespeople of poaching when they hunt to feed their families.
3. Stop Ignoring the eviction of tribal peoples from their ancestral homelands.
4. Recognise the ownership of their lands. Stop claiming tribal lands as wilderness since they’ve been managed by tribal communities for centuries.
5. Educate the rest of the local population about the indigenous culture, history and rights in order to eliminate prejudices, fake assumption

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