

***Position Paper for the Special Session on Indigenous Affairs***

Libya is thrilled to be part of the Special Session on Indigenous Affairs of the General Assembly, as we believe there is much to be discussed on the three chosen topics: Indigenous Peoples, Health Care, Mental Health, and Wellness, Indigenous Land Rights, Climate Change impacts and Environmental Protection of Resources, and Indigenous Peoples, Poverty, and Development. Considering that 77% of Libya's population (Temehu, 2009), Libya takes their interests at heart. We are looking forward to working with all Member States on these three topics. Libya believes that it is in the International Community's best interest to find solutions to today's problems concerning minorities.

**I. Indigenous Peoples, Health Care, Mental Health, and Wellness**

Libya, taking into consideration the well-being of its entire population, is fully supportive of the development of indigenous peoples' access to healthcare, mental healthcare, and wellness, as we made it accessible to everyone, even in remote regions. Libya believes that minorities should not be left out of health services like they often are, as mental healthcare is necessary in order to create a better world. Libya's concern for the wellbeing of indigenous people is shown in our vote in favor of the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (DRIP), declaring that "indigenous individuals also have the right to access, without any discrimination, all social and health services" (DRIP, 2007). It is also noted that, as a Member State of the United Nations, Libya pursues the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) such as SDG 3: "Good Health and Well-Being", as the Libyan people has access to free healthcare. Furthermore, Libya has made many efforts to bring health services to tribal communities. As a matter of fact, in 2012, a new mental health program, created in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), was launched. This program offers mobile mental health specialists, able to travel and offer their services in remote regions. Also, in 1974, Libya could only hospitalise 200 people at a time due to mental illness. In 2013, we could manage ten times as many. Libya's health system is free and accessible to everyone, therefore. However, Libya, as many other Member States, still has much progress to make in indigenous peoples' health care, mental health, and wellbeing. Health services are concentrated in the urban areas and there is an important lack of doctors (Doctors Without Borders, 2016). In order to achieve better health and wellbeing for indigenous communities, Libya has a few possible solutions that could be considered. First, decentralizing healthcare by offering traveling health professionals. Doing so would allow those communities, often far from any urban centers, to still have access to trained professionals. Second, a closer monitoring of the countries adhering to the DRIP by the United Nations would ensure its clauses are more dutifully carried out, ensuring equality between races in healthcare as declared in the DRIP. Third, encouraging countries to welcome non-governmental organizations such as the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders would allow them to help indigenous people inhabiting conflict ridden zones.

**II. Indigenous Land Rights, Climate Change impacts and Environmental Protection of Resources**

Libya, however, believes that indigenous land rights is not a priority and that indigenous people should have just as much land rights as any other demographic, as its tribal population does not have the interest to exploit their resources. The desert in Libya's southern region houses a great deal of its tribal population and contains two valuable resources: water and oil. Petrol exportation brings in 4,975 millions of American dollars every year (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, 2015). If the government and private companies lose control of this resource in favor of the tribes, Libya would lose a huge part of its GDP, thus furthering it from the United Nation's SDG 1: "No Poverty". Libya also houses the biggest and longest man-made river in the world, which offers 70% of Libyans running water (Human Rights Investigation, 2011). The project is still in development, offering more and more Libyans access to water. However, this river takes its source underground on tribal territory. Should our tribal population get complete land rights, the project would need to be stopped as they do not have the interest to maintain it, having the knowledge to survive in such a dry environment (Libya Herald, 2016). Stopping the project would get Libya further away from SDG 6: "Clean Water and Sanitation". Furthermore, land rights in Libya have never been absolute and shared between the government and tribes (FAO, 1969). Nevertheless, Libya still has a few solutions that could satisfy both parties. First, instead of giving tribal and indigenous populations full control over the protection and exploitation of resources and land rights, governments could exploit said resources in collaboration with the local population, as proposed by the Tuaregs inhabiting our South and encouraged by the Zuwayah tribe (Reuters, 2016). As a result, Libya will be developing the territory and providing jobs. Second, if collaboration is not possible, governments and companies

should be able to give indemnities in exchange for the right to exploit resources. Indigenous communities would then be able to develop themselves with such compensations while governments would still have access to the resources.

### **III. Indigenous Peoples, Poverty, and Development**

Libya, conscious of the poverty and struggles faced by indigenous communities in many countries, believes that working on indigenous peoples' poverty and development of their communities is of crucial importance. Doing so would be aligned with many SDGs, such as SDG 1: "No Poverty", SDG 8: "Decent Work and Economic Growth", and SDG 11: "Sustainable Cities and Communities". Libya's concern for poverty and development is undeniable by its collaboration with the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP). That collaboration resulted in Libya's first national election in 50 years. Libya also signed the 1972 Agreement establishing the African Development Bank, improving the economy both tribal and non-tribal communities. Indigenous development is a matter worth working on, as proves Libya's signature to the DRIP. Libya understands that to end poverty, education is necessary. As such, our education system is free for everyone, and compulsory until the end of primary school. Thanks to our school system, 91.39% of the Libyan people is literate (UNESCO, 2015), increasing accessibility to many jobs. Libya is still aware that there is progress to be made. Many ways are possible to achieve such progress, particularly in indigenous communities. First, creating schools in indigenous towns and funding them appropriately would develop those communities. These schools should be created with the cooperation of indigenous people, as to make sure to respect their cultural heritage. They should also be able to teach their own language as a primary language, as recommended by the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP). Second, governments, in partnership with indigenous communities, should exploit the natural resources near those communities, thus creating jobs for indigenous people and developing the territory and communities. Third, establishing with the help of the United Nations an economic plan based on indigenous people's lifestyle would allow economic growth while ensuring the respect of their diverse cultures.

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