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The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is dedicated to providing financial and political support for the promotion and improvement of indigenous communities's access to health care and overall wellbeing. As a major colonizer in the 19th century, the United Kingdom recognizes its role in the issues that affect today's indigenous communities, and therefore strives to be a positive contributor to the advancement of indigenous peoples' rights and sustainable prosperity, while recognizing the sovereignty and responsibility of states with populous indigenous communities. With no indigenous populations, as defined by the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), inhabiting British territories, the UK wishes to continue working in collaboration with concerned states and provide resources for their endeavours in this matter.

Topic 1: Indigenous Peoples, Health Care, Mental Health, and Wellness

As remnants of the wave of colonialism in the 19th century, institutional racism and discriminatory practices are one of the biggest challenges to indigenous peoples' access to health care in our modern age. This has harmful repercussions for indigenous peoples, who are prone to the contraction of diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis, or to health issues such as malnutrition, and high maternal and infantile mortality¹. These groups are also especially susceptible to mental illnesses such as depression, which can often go untreated because of a misdiagnosis when arrival to the hospital. In fact, indigenous peoples' depressions are often not given proper treatment due to discrimination and the relationship to other health and social issues present in their communities like alcoholism, addiction, and antisocial behaviour, not well

¹ Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues. (June 2014). *The Health of Indigenous Peoples*. Web. 9 November 2016.

understood². Furthermore, indigenous communities can be pessimistic or distrustful of western medicinal practices which may limit access to much needed health treatment and prevention. A 2006 study found that the primary source of health care of 80% of the population of low-income countries was traditional medicine practices³. In that sense, member states should strive to help indigenous peoples overcome that distrust while respecting traditional indigenous knowledge.

The United Kingdom believes that an important part of indigenous peoples' wellness derives from the wellness of indigenous women, being the major provider for children . In that sense, the UK has worked in collaboration with countries with high indigenous populations, such as Columbia, towards the improvement and promotion of indigenous women's health issues. In particular, the UK has worked with women's civil society groups in indigenous communities to protect essential health issues, especially relating to sexual violence and the creation of support systems for victims⁴.

The UK believes that the implementation of programs similar to the one created in Columbia, especially in countries with high indigenous populations, would prove to be vital for the improvement of indigenous people's wellness and access to health care. These programs would promote a bilateral dialogue between indigenous communities and local governments, as to improve the access to and efficacy of treatments and services, while respecting indigenous traditional knowledge. The United Kingdom also wishes to see the establishment of a system of traditional medicine ambassadors, who would act as transition agents between western health care providers and traditional indigenous communities, as to foster trust and confidence between these two communities' traditions and methods. Ambassadors would go through training, and a focus on recruiting a young indigenous demographic could provide them with a sense of

² Cultural Survival. (1999). *The Mental Health of Indigenous Peoples: An International Overview*. Web. 9 November 2016.

³ (Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, June 2014)

⁴ Foreign and Commonwealth Office. (2015). *Diversity and Equality Report 2014-2015*. Web. 7 November 2016.

community and usefulness, which would have an invaluable impact for their self-worth and mental health.

Topic 2: Indigenous Land Rights, Climate Change impacts and Environmental Protection of Resources

Due to an increasingly globalized world, indigenous communities' right to land are now more than ever threatened by the extraction of natural resources and the lack of legal recognition of their rights to ancestral land. The scientific community is increasingly recognizing the expertise and importance of indigenous peoples' knowledge and protection of their ancestral lands⁵. Not only is this expertise crucial to the promotion of ecologically responsible decisions, only a small number of states recognize the ownership of indigenous communities over ancestral lands. In fact, while this ownership can be recognized, often the lands will be leased out to corporations or government agencies without the proper informed consent of indigenous peoples⁶, a need that is clearly outlined in UNDRIP under the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) process⁷.

The United Kingdom has ratified the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and believes it to be an "important tool in helping to enhance the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples"⁸. The UK embraces the Declaration's defence of indigenous people's human rights, and with the exception of the right to self-determination, defends its position against the concept of collective rights in international law⁹. Having no

⁵ Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO). (2016). *Free Prior and Informed Consent*. Web. 9 November 2016.

⁶ United Nations Department of Public Information. (January 2010). *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*. Web. 9 November 2016.

⁷ (FAO, 2016)

⁸ United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. (13 September, 2007). *Interpretive Statement on the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Web. 7 November 2016.

⁹ (United Kingdom, 2007)

indigenous populations living on its territory, as defined by the UNDRIP¹⁰, the United Kingdom's focus for the issue of land rights and resources is in advocating for the responsibility of international corporations to consider the human rights of affected populations in their operations. In that sense, the UK was the first country to set a guidance for businesses to include such concerns in their activities locally and abroad, while promoting a transparent dialogue between those businesses, local governments, and indigenous communities¹¹.

The United Kingdom believes that an important solution to the issue of land rights and climate change would be through the establishment of a clear set of guides for corporations seeking to extract resources from indigenous peoples' territories and helping to establish a legal framework in which these companies and indigenous communities can have productive and transparent dialogues on the protection of these territories. The UK is also committed to the creation of partnerships and training programs which would encourage indigenous communities to be more interested in climate change and its affect on territories, relying on indigenous traditional knowledge in partnership with environmental science as to be as effective as possible while dealing with this world issue.

Topic 3: Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Development

A major obstacle to development, for most developing nations, is the lack of or poor access to education. This is especially true for indigenous peoples in these countries, who are often much less educated than the non-indigenous population. In Guatemala, half of indigenous adolescents (aged 15 to 19) have not completed primary education¹², while in Peru, non-indigenous

¹⁰ United Nations. (13 September 2007). *General Assembly adopts Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Web. 7 November 2016.

¹¹ Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. (May 2016). *Good Business: Implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*. Web. 7 November 2016.

¹² (FAO, 2016)

populations receive on average 2.3 years of education more than their counterparts¹³. While improvements have been made towards the reduction of poverty in many low-income countries, indigenous communities remain deeply linked to high poverty levels which remain constant¹⁴. In Asia, where it is estimated resides 70% of the world's indigenous populations¹⁵, indigenous communities are faced with specific poverty-inducing issues, such as forced relocation and integration into market economies for which they are not always suited¹⁶.

The United Kingdom supports the development and other economic and social rights outlined in Articles 18-24 of the UNDRIP, especially those concerning the rights of representation and responsibility of indigenous peoples' institutions to secure subsistence and development for indigenous communities. Another path to prosperity and development for indigenous peoples is the strengthening of legal and judicial systems in low-income countries with high indigenous demographics. In that sense, the United Kingdom has committed financially and operationally to the creation of a program that targets the improvement of the legal system in Bolivia, through police and prison reform, as a way to bridge the distrust that exists between indigenous communities and the judiciary system, and improve indigenous peoples' access to the legal process and resources¹⁷.

The United Kingdom believes that the implementation of similar programs to the one in Bolivia would impact positively the development and creation of prosperity in indigenous communities by providing them with the necessary legal resources to protect their lands and human rights. Member states should also consider partnership programs for indigenous youth with local businesses and governments in law and judiciary system as to promote and inspire trust and

¹³ (FAO, 2016)

¹⁴ (FAO, 2016)

¹⁵ Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP). (2005). *Indigenous Peoples and Poverty*. Web. 9 November 2016.

¹⁶ (CROP, 2005)

¹⁷ (FCO, 2015)

interest in these systems, with the goal to later provide these young people with scholarships and bursaries in the domains they followed. This would undeniably increase access to education for these indigenous communities. Another issue would be acclimating hegemonic educational systems to the reality and traditions of indigenous communities. By working in partnership with these communities' elders, and by promoting and incentivizing the recruiting and training indigenous peoples as teachers and educational professionals, the education system would certainly move towards a more effective and suitable model. This program would also encourage development in indigenous communities by providing crucial employment opportunities that value the prized knowledge and expertise of indigenous peoples.