

## **Position Paper**

Drew Mehta, Crescent School

Republic of Guinea

Special Session on Indigenous Affairs

People all over the world live differently. Be it based on their culture, their country, or simply who they are, no one group of people is exactly alike to another. As the technology and ideas of our world evolve, so does the way of life for many of these groups of people. Unfortunately, developments in all aspects of society such as healthcare, education, or even simply the opportunities available to some are not always applicable to every person on Earth. The indigenous peoples that can be found across the globe are an example of this. The Republic of Guinea would like to present itself to humbly take its seat on the United Nations Special Session on Indigenous Affairs with the goal of improving the standard of living not just for the indigenous peoples of Guinea, but across the globe.

The first topic for the committee's discussion is the healthcare and wellness of indigenous peoples. Given that over 85% of the population of Guinea is comprised of indigenous groups, statistics relating to the Republic of Guinea can be considered to be a somewhat accurate reflection of the indigenous population as a whole. The entire nation of Guinea faces the problem of a lack of accessible healthcare, which is reflected by the life expectancy rate of the total population, which at 60.6 is one of the lowest in the world. We were fortunate for only a small portion of our population to have been affected by the 2014 Ebola outbreak, but the same cannot be said for diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. Past attempts have been made to aid indigenous peoples throughout West Africa with the use of western medicine, but many were reluctant to take part due to poor treatment from some doctors and nurses. In order to revive these attempts of providing indigenous peoples with treatment that they would not normally receive, this special session could promote grants to each country, allowing them to develop their healthcare infrastructure in a way that would suit the needs of both their indigenous and non-indigenous population. This would allow each country to combine western medicine with the traditional healing practices specific to their nation. The Republic of Guinea would handle this by conferring with our respective indigenous groups to ensure that the improvement of our healthcare infrastructure would remain respectful of indigenous culture and heritage. This could also help to solve the discrimination faced in the past by indigenous peoples as it could provide training for locals to eventually run establishments such as hospitals and clinics on their own. Unfortunately, mental illnesses cannot be treated the same way as other diseases which have affected our country. Throughout the world mental illness has a greater effect on indigenous populations than non-indigenous ones, which can be traced to a variety of factors. Within Guinea, the mental health of indigenous youths could be supported by increasing both awareness and the number of opportunities that the youth population receives. By introducing mental health awareness programs we will hopefully not only reduce the current high depression statistics, but also those of future generations. Lack of opportunity could be considered to be one of the major causes of depression amongst indigenous youth, which is why the Republic of Guinea

would promote an increase in funding of our education infrastructure as well as the creation of job opportunities through our proposed hospital plan. The delegation of Guinea would like to recognize the fact that many of the healthcare problems which indigenous peoples face are hard to address due to the lack of data which countries have on their indigenous populations. Therefore, we as a delegation would like to recommend the improved recording of statistics among each member state of this general assembly, as information gathered by one nation could be very beneficial to another.

The second topic for the committee's discussion is indigenous land rights, climate change, and the protection of resources. Being it that our main export comes through the mining industry, the homes and communities of our indigenous population could potentially find themselves threatened. Fortunately, we have yet to be a part of any large scale investment projects as our infrastructure is still developing and is not currently ready to host one. This means that Guinea has yet to face any major challenges in terms of the protection of our resources, although we would like to encourage a set of guidelines for multinational corporations to follow when working in indigenous territory. With the loss of indigenous lands comes the loss of their heritage and culture, and preserving these things is of the utmost importance to the Republic of Guinea. This is why the delegation of Guinea would support a set of guidelines for foreign investors to follow with relation to indigenous peoples. The key for this is that we make sure our indigenous population has a voice if they believe there is any form of infringement on their lands. The Republic of Guinea would accomplish this by holding talks with the indigenous groups whose homes may be affected in order to establish a plan that suits both parties as well as the environment.

The third and final topic for the committee's discussion is the poverty and development of indigenous peoples. As recently as 2004, the poverty rate in our country sat at 49%, which is an extremely alarming rate that needs to be lowered. Given that a fair portion of our youth population finds themselves unemployed, we would support foreign investment opportunities that would harvest our supply of half the world's bauxite (aluminium) as well as fair portions of gold, silver, and diamonds. These opportunities would create many new job opportunities which we would ask the majority of be made up of people native to Guinea. This alone will not be able to solve our nation's poverty crisis. For this reason we would support a motion from the United Nations General Assembly to provide aid to countries facing poverty crises such as ourselves. We would direct this funding mainly towards the creation of new jobs as well as towards our education infrastructure. Educating our fairly illiterate population (41% of the population being literate as of 2010) would be a step in the right direction towards becoming an entirely self-reliant nation.

In conclusion, the positions outlined by the delegation of Guinea on the issues of healthcare, land rights, and poverty and development are paramount to us. We are not only focused on assisting the development of the indigenous peoples of Guinea but also of the indigenous peoples throughout the world.