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

The Ethiopian Constitution, under article 39, establishes the right to self-government and self- determination to for all of the country’s ethnic groups1. Furthermore, under article 54/3 of the Constitution, at least 20 seats of Ethiopia’s House of Peoples Representatives are reserved for minority nationalities, thus guaranteeing them a voice in political discourse2. Ethiopian pastoralists, under the Constitution, are granted fair pricing on their products. They also have the right to free land grazing and cannot be displaced from their lands without their wish3. Ethiopia recognizes that its ethnic minorities’ way of life depends on the environment, with pastoralist and agriculturalist groups traditionally peacefully negotiating resource sharing agreements. However, problems can arise due to infrastructure projects and urban expansion. In response, the Government has made an effort to address inequalities between groups and prevent conflict4. Ethiopia also recognizes that climate change also poses a threat to some of its ethnic minorities, as it leads to a loss of livestock5.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with the objective of laying down rights constituting “the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well- being of the indigenous peoples of the world”, states indigenous peoples’ rights to their

1“Ethiopian Constitution”, *University of Pennsylvania Center for African Studies*, <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Hornet/Ethiopian_Constitution.html> [accessed November 7, 2016]

2Ibid

3“Pastoral Development Pathways in Ethiopia; the Policy Environment and Critical Constraints”, *United Nations*, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5789pastoralism_development_pathways_rev2.pdf> [accessed November 7, 2016]

4“UN Human Rights Council: Addendum to the Report of the Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, Mission to Ethiopia (28 November-12 December 2006)”, *United Nations*, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/461f9ea82.html> [accessed 7 November 2016]

5“Voices that must be heard: minorities and indigenous people combating climate change”, *Minority Rights*, <http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/MRG_Brief_ClimateC.pdf> [accessed 7 November 2016]

lands and that states should recognize these rights6. Ethiopia recognizes that all of its ethnic groups should have the right to administer their own land and has made this clear in its constitution. Thus, Ethiopia believes that signing this non-binding declaration would yield no benefits. Indigenous peoples often attend the UNFCCC (United Nations Climate Change Conference), a yearly conference concentrating on dealing with climate change, and are represented by the IIPFCC (International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change). This organisation’s mandate is to agree upon what indigenous peoples will be negotiating for during the conference7. Ethiopia, as a signatory of the Paris Agreement8, supports any effort to help mitigate climate change.

Ethiopia believes that increased communication between governments and ethnic minorities familiar with particular ecosystems would allow for better conservation of these regions. As ethnic groups in Ethiopia have the right to administer their own territory, Ethiopia believes that in this way, groups familiar with a particular ecoregion are able to conserve it as it is under their administration. As such, Ethiopia believes that other states should let different groups administer their own land so as to improve conservation. Furthermore, Ethiopian pastoralists live in one of the harshest climates in the Horn with an environmentally sustainable lifestyle9. Ethiopia believes that such ways of life should be protected by the government by preventing them from being displaced from their lands against their wishes. In order to make sure that their voices are heard, Ethiopia encourages reserving government seats for members of ethnic minorities so as to give them a voice and better respect their concerns over land rights. Ethiopia would also support measures to establish that the land rights of all of a country’s citizens are all equally protected, as is the case in Ethiopia.

# 6 “United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”, *United Nations*, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf> [accessed 7 November 2016]

# 7 *IIPFCC*, <http://www.iipfcc.org/> [accessed 7 November 2016]

# 8 “Paris Agreement”, United Nations Treaty Collection, <https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVII-7-d&chapter=27&clang=_en>

[accessed 7 November 2016]

9“Pastoral Development Pathways in Ethiopia; the Policy Environment and Critical Constraints”, *United Nations*, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5789pastoralism_development_pathways_rev2.pdf> [accessed November 7, 2016]