Ila Ghoshal

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

United Nations General Assembly: Special Session on Indigenous Affair

Topic: Indigenous Peoples, Poverty, and Development

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) is a developing nation and, as such, has only recently started making strides in poverty reduction. During this time, a low level of inequality has been maintained1. The Ethiopian leather industry (the second largest industry in the country) is pastoralist dominated which proves that ethnic minorities’ environmentally sustainable ways of life can be economically viable2. Furthermore, under the Constitution, pastoralists 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. The government of Ethiopia also recognizes that education is an important part of the fight against poverty and that it is important for education to take place in ethnic minorities’ mother tongue. As such, states in the Constitution that “Every nation, nationality and people shall have the right to speak, write and develop its language and to promote its culture, help it grow and flourish, and preserve its historical heritage”4.

Formed in 2000, the UNFPII (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues) has the mandate of representing all of the indigenous people in the world today. This body issues recommendatory resolution to the UNGA or the Security Council, however, it has no direct legislative or executive authority5. 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”, has been the most

1“Ethiopia Poverty Assessment”, *World Bank*, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/publication/ethiopia-poverty-assessment> [accessed November 7, 2016]

2“The State of the World’s Indigenous Peoples”, *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/SOWIP/en/SOWIP_web.pdf> [accessed November 7, 2016]

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

5*United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/unpfii-sessions-2.html> [accessed November 7, 2016]

important UN resolution regarding indigenous empowerment. However, the declaration is not legally binding6. Thus, all-around, there has been a lack of practical action on the international level. Ethiopia would like to see concrete action taken to improve the state of education and poverty reduction for ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples.

The FDRE believes that affirmative action for ethnic minorities would be an important step in increasing the number of members of ethnic minorities with tertiary education. Ethiopia also believes that encouraging members of different communities to become teachers would be beneficial to those communities as it would render education more accessible both geographically and in terms of language barriers as well as contribute to reducing poverty. Furthermore, Ethiopia believes that improving the state of education and reducing poverty for its ethnic minorities living in rural areas must start with the collection of data disaggregated by ethnicity so that it can better target any problem areas. Ethiopia would like to see collaboration between its ethnic minorities and the government in improving the state of education. Additionally, Ethiopia recognizes that there is gender inequality in the education of these minorities7, which Ethiopia would like to reduce, as under the Constitution every Ethiopian has access to education8. Ethiopia believes that guaranteeing fair prices for products produced by minorities is another useful measure for reducing poverty, and would like to see other states implement similar measures.

# 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]

7Gender and Indigenous Peoples’ Education”, United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/BriefingNote3_GREY.pdf> [accessed 7 November 2016]

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