Indonesia-Special Session on Indigenous Affairs

Indigenous peoples have been one of the most marginalized groups in the world, and often times, this is due to a lack of solid socio-economic infrastructure. This lower sense of economic and financial security are directly related to the lower quality of life that indigenous people possess, and in turn, causes a vast array of other problems. Given that indigenous populations are in many cases isolated, they are unable to access many of the resources that people living inland enjoy. Indigenous peoples’ wellness and health are negatively affected, and combined with their lack of land rights and their developing status, it is clear that action needs to be taken in order to mitigate the effects of both human and natural implications on these people. Over 95% of the population in Indonesia consider themselves to be natives of the country. Indonesia is a signatory to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; however, this isn’t as applicable since the vast majority of Indonesians are indigenous. Therefore, they are entitled to the same rights as non-indigenous groups albeit the Indonesian government has set in place legislation arguing for the rights of indigenous peoples.

In terms of health, the indigenous population in Indonesia is primarily affected by the prevalence of smoking and disease. As aforementioned, many of these problems can be attributed to a lack of proper funds needed to sustain a healthy style of life. It is important to note that nearly thirty percent of Indonesia’s population is under the age of fifteen. Research has suggested that nearly ⅓ of Indonesian children have been affected by natural issues, thereby causing them to have stunted growth. One of the many issues that indigenous people face (not just Indonesia) is the lack of potable water. In Indonesia, this is an ongoing problem, as water related illnesses are a major cause of diarrhea. Given that Indonesia’s population pyramid is skewed towards the bottom (younger ages), diarrhea is a major issue and can often times kill children. In fact, almost ⅓ of people from the age of 1 birth to 4 years old who died actually passed away from diarrhea. Another communicable disease that is ravaging the indigenous populations in Indonesia is HIV/AIDS. Combined with the prevalence of prostitution, AIDS has been slowly on the rise in the more populated parts of Indonesia; however, it is spreading to the more rural, indigenous areas as well. Like HIV/AIDS, Malaria has set its foot in the indigenous populations in Indonesia via the cities. On the other hand, the maternal mortality rate has been oscillating between a higher percentage and a lower percentage every year, despite this issue being one of Indonesia’s Millennium Development Goals. The Republic of Indonesia believes that necessary steps must be taken to protect the indigenous groups, as they are such a large portion of the total population. Standard operating procedures need to be established in order to mitigate both the effect that diseases have on the population, and to lower the maternal mortality rate. Education, especially in rural areas, needs to be taught in order to warn both children and the adults of the risks that health issues pose, and what could be done to prevent them. In addition, given that 1/10 of the population has mental health disorders, more funding needs to be placed into that respect, in order to increase the wellbeing of the population. In theory, this should have been done in 2004 following the devastating Tsunami.

Additionally, until 2012, Indonesia did not recognize the existence of its indigenous peoples. A result of this was that in 1999, a Forestry Law allowed the land of indigenous people to be converted into state forests. Almost one-third of Indonesia’s territories have been given private concessions, and much of the land overlapped with what was considered indigenous peoples’ territories. However, since then, the Republic of Indonesia has undergone significant reform in terms of land rights and the environmental protection of resources. A couple of reforms that the Republic of Indonesia should undergo is form a task force while ratifying legislation that affirms the rights of indigenous peoples. In addition, the process of geospatial mapping should be improved in order to more clearly demarcate territorial possessions. On the other hand, climate change has affected Indonesia in a very large way. For one, Indonesia is the third largest emitter of greenhouses gases, and that has serious implications on both the temperature and the environmental infrastructure of the land. The abundant forest fires and environmental degradation can be blamed, and climate change can very easily negatively affect both the economy and the populace’s health, as aforementioned. One solution that may reverse this process is by planting trees in areas that have been ravaged by forest fires, and implement the newest technological advances in order to fight them. The Republic of Indonesia believes that the coastline is of utmost priority; however, as it is due to flooding and has taken the brute of the force in terms of climate change.

Furthermore, as aforementioned, indigenous poverty is widespread in areas of Indonesia, despite the Republic of Indonesia having the largest economy in Southeast Asia. Given the fact that trade and domestic consumption has decreased, the rate at which poverty reduction is being handled is at an all time low. Jobs are not being created, and this poses a major issue for the almost two million young people trying to enter the workforce every year. Without a sustainable income, the indigenous people of Indonesia cannot address issues that relate to poverty. On top of this, there is a rather large socio-economic divide between the wealthy and the poor. The Republic of Indonesia’s GINI coefficient, a tool used to measure the socioeconomic disparities (inequality), is much higher than that of neighboring countries. The Republic of Indonesia believes that this issue lies in the government policy. More attention should be paid to investments, and particularly opening up both a private and public sector. In addition, the cost of logistical issues should be kept to a minimum in order to maximize an investor’s income. All of the abovementioned issues need to be dealt with immediately, and the Republic of Indonesia is taking their best steps to mitigate the problems that indigenous groups face.