**Committee:** Special Session

**Topic:** Indigenous Affairs

**Country:** Burkina Faso

**Delegate:** Yasmin Umar (Blyth Academy – Lawrence Park)

According to the United Nations, indigenous people are the most marginalized groups in the world.  They face widespread discrimination, hardship, and poverty.  This is a result of generational systematic and social racism and in many cases, cultural and physical genocide. All of this is an aftermath of colonization and imperialism from 19th century western Europeans.  These practices have had long-term impacts, destroying the economic, political, and cultural structure of the Indigenous peoples. These consequences became further evident after the independence of many African countries

Burkina Faso recognizes its indigenous people – specifically those of the Peul and Tuareg descent.  Burkina Faso recognizes that in the past, the indigenous peoples have been economically marginalized and victims of human rights abuses. They have traditionally lived in geographically isolated regions and practiced a nomadic lifestyle. (Burkina Faso’s Constitution guarantees education and health for all; however, due to lack of resources and proper infrastructure, the nomadic populations have not always been able to take full advantage of these rights. Peul pastoralists are settling in more populated areas of Burkina Faso).

In 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a non-binding Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people after 22 years of debate. Burkina Faso voted in favor of this Declaration, as it would improve the health, education and welfare of its indigenous peoples.  Burkina Faso recognizes that indigenous people across the world are under greater pressure as developers, mineral extractors, and industrialists encroach on their land.  Burkina Faso supports the Declaration’s call to give more control to tribes over their land and resources they have traditionally possessed.

Burkina Faso revised their National Health Policy in 2014. As presented to the World Health Organization in 2016, there were four strategic priorities: (a) Strengthen health policies including the *development of initiatives to promote traditional medicine*, (b) improve maternal, neonatal, infant and adolescent health, (c) strengthen disease control, especially vaccine-preventable diseases, HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, and (d) health promotion in all geographical regions of Burkina Faso.  This includes an emphasis on addressing gender, human rights and ethics in health policies and programs.

Many of these health initiatives rely on technical and financial partners (the key agency being the World Health Organization).  Four joint programs have already been set-up and implemented to reduce child mortality and for controlling HIV/AIDS with PMNCH (Partnership for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health), H4+ Canada and MUSKOKA France). A key focus is to reach the remote northern and central-northern regions of Burkina Faso (where a large number of indigenous peoples reside).

Burkina Faso also recognizes the importance of education being accessible to the Indigenous Population.  Burkina Faso is actively working with UNICEF on three specific educational approaches. (a) Bisogno, which is a community-based integrated early childhood development program.  Targeted at 3-6 year olds, it is an integrated package of health care services, nutrition, mental development, education and protection.  It also frees up older girls from child care responsibilities and encourages them to attend school. (b) Satellite schools.  This brings education closer to remote communities and incorporates that community’s culture, environment and linguistics.  Burkina Faso is working with the Peul and Tuareg peoples to ensure their heritage is incorporated and learnt by successive generations. (c) Non-Formal Basic Education for children aged 9-15 through the Non-Formal Basic Education Centers throughout Burkina Faso (including in remote regions).  The intention is to provide a basic education and vocational apprenticeship so the young people of Burkina Faso have better social and economic integration into society – even if they did not complete school in the formal system.  This is essential for the indigenous nomadic young people who may not have had this opportunity. Measurable goals and outcomes have been determined together with the Peul and Tuareg communities.

Burkina Faso believes that the United Nations General Assembly Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People must be adopted by all countries.  Burkina Faso pushes for the continued expansion of such policies while urging organizations such as the WTO, UNICEF and other organizations to continue their support (financial, human resources and other measures) to ensure health and education is made available and accessible to all of our indigenous peoples.  Burkina Faso will continue to work with these communities in the programs that are already underway; and will ensure continual improvements to reach specified targets.  It would also reduce discrimination by promoting the full and effective participation of tribes in all matters that concern them. Burkina Faso believes it would also allow indigenous people to pursue their own economic visions and social developments.  This would stress involvement in education to ensure their traditions, values, and cultures are taught to successive generations.  It would also include government initiatives, grants, and mentorship programs supporting the development of Indigenous businesses.

**Bibliography**

1. Burkina Faso. Retrieved November 09, 2016, from <http://www.awf.org/country/burkina-faso>
2. Mikkelsen, C. Indigenous peoples in Burkina Faso. Retrieved November 09, 2016, from <http://www.iwgia.org/regions/africa/burkina-faso>
3. Burkina Faso - Minority Rights Group. (n.d.). Retrieved November 09, 2016, from <http://minorityrights.org/country/burkina-faso/>
4. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Refworld | World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Burkina Faso. Retrieved November 09, 2016, from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4954ce2623.html>
5. UNDP. (2013). Human Development Report 2013. The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World. Retrieved November 9, 2016, from http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/BFA.pdf