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Republic of Suriname

Chantal Lo A Njoe



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Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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Permanent Mission of the Republic of Suriname to the United Nations/ 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 320, New York, NY 10017/Telephone 212-826-0660/fax: 212 980-7029/ email: Suriname@un.int

Madam Chair,

At the outset I wish to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. We would like to ensure you of our continued cooperation as you steer the work of this Committee to a successful conclusion.

Suriname wishes to align itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Belize on behalf of CARICOM.

In a national capacity we would like to add the following elements.

Indigenous Peoples, divided over 4 distinct tribes, are an integral part of the population of the Republic of Suriname. In addition we count among the population the tribal and forest dependent peoples consisting of 6 tribes of Maroons, the descendants of Africans, who freed themselves from slavery during colonial times.

Both the indigenous and tribal peoples have established communities in the hinterland of Suriname based on their respective African and Amerindian customs and traditions.

Suriname's adherence to non-discrimination and equality is based on the very fabric of our diverse multi-ethnic society. These principles are solidly embedded in our Constitution.

Respect for cultural diversity and peaceful co-existence are therefore distinct characteristics of the Surinamese society.

I can proudly share with you that Suriname can be considered as the country with the most diverse ethnic and linguistic population of the South American continent.

Madam Chair,

Consultation and cooperation with indigenous and tribal peoples is valued by the Government to safeguarding their involvement in the formulation of public policies.

We recognize that consultation is important for ensuring wide-support and creating a collaborative environment of mutual trust.

The Government of Suriname has placed the issue of the recognition of the collective rights of our indigenous and tribal peoples high on its agenda.

In the National Development Plan 2012-2016, the Government commits itself to exert all efforts to address the matter of land demarcation for our indigenous and tribal peoples.

In this regard I wish to note that 2 conferences were convened in 2010 and 2011. These conferences discussed a broad array of issues, in particular land rights and mechanisms for consultation.

The President of the Republic of Suriname in his recent address to Parliament has indicated that the consultations with the indigenous and tribal peoples will be continued and a third national conference will be convened in due course.

The purpose is to achieve broad-based functional insights than can ensure a harmonious solution to the matter of the demarcation of the land and territories of our indigenous and tribal peoples.

It is also important to note that the Government is advocating for an approach that has a national character and which can be placed within the constitutional parameters.

Madam Chair,

Suriname has actively participated in the lead up to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, including in the negotiations for the Outcome Document.

We were represented at the World Conference by a delegation that signifies the true nature of our indigenous and tribal populations.

We welcome the Outcome Document of the World Conference because it provides us with renewed commitments to further promote and uphold the rights of indigenous peoples.

It also provides a renewed commitment for Member States to work in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples on matters affecting them.

Of equal importance is the coordination within the UN system on indigenous issues.

Madam Chair,

We are close to the end of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People and the home stretch for the achievement of the millennium development goals.

As we deliberate the future framework to guide the development discourse for the next 15 years, we strongly believe that the rights of indigenous peoples should be well reflected.

In the outcome document of the World Conference on Sustainable Development the importance was highlighted of the participation of indigenous peoples in the achievement of sustainable development.

It was also recognized that the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples make an important contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, addressing the effects of climate change in the pursuit of improving social well-being and sustainable livelihoods.

The discussions on the post-2015 development agenda should therefore include the development of clear indicators to measure progress of sustainable development policies and programmes on indigenous peoples.

The international community has an opportunity this time around to correct the omission in the MDGs where no targets and indicators were developed to measure progress on the achievement of these goals.

In closing Madam Chair,

Suriname remains committed to take all necessary measures to ensure the involvement and full and effective participation of its indigenous and tribal peoples in all matters affecting them.

We are convinced that a climate of confidence with our indigenous and tribal peoples is our only avenue allowing for a productive dialogue and ensuring that the rights of the members of these communities are upheld and respected.

I thank you for your attention.