



OPDP/PFII/1/4/23

Date: 10th April, 2023

International Decade of indigenous languages

STATEMENT BY OGIEK PEOPLES' DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (OPDP)

Chairperson,

Across the world, we have observed an alarming increase in the extinction and disappearance of the indigenous peoples' language and culture. Chair, I come from an indigenous community in Kenya known as Ogiek whose population number 52,000 as per 2019 national census. Our indigenous language and culture is not exceptional as it is under threat. Presently, about 40% of the community speaks mother language. We have been struggling to protect our unique language, identity and way of life. We, the Ogiek are custodians and conservators of the forest and depends on its for our survival however we continued to subjected to several evictions that has contributed to massive loss of language, culture and biodiversity. The displacement from our territories has led to assimilation, intermarriages and migration has heighten language and culture loss.

Despite our efforts to revive our language and culture we are hindered by insecure land tenure rights. On May 26th 2017, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights delivered judgment recognizing Ogiek as an indigenous Community in Kenya and custodians of Mau Forest Complex. Despite the courts decision, the Ogiek community are yet to realize their territorial rights. They continue to face numerous violations of human rights that have adversely contributed to the immense loss of their Ogiek language, culture and their traditional knowledge. As a youth, if I lost my language and culture, what future will be left for us.

The situation requires quick redress through concerted efforts. **We therefore call upon:-**

1. The permanent forum to requests the Kenyan government to hasten the implementation process of implementing the African Court's decision to restore Ogiek land tenure rights. This will ensure Ogiek get back their home which will aid in promoting their language and cultural identity.
2. The forum to urge UN agencies to work with the states to ensure the objective of reviving indigenous languages is achieved by integrating it within the school curriculum. This will ensure the indigenous language is upheld among the young generation. We hope the UN agencies can share with us on the status of these discussions during the next UNPFII.
3. The EMRIP to integrate the discussion on indigenous language loss during the next forum and strategize on how the challenge can be reversed across the globe through engagement of the diverse actors.

Finally, I would like to thank the UN Voluntary fund for indigenous peoples for supporting my participation in this Forum.

Thank you for your attention

Eunice Chepkemoi, Ogiek Peoples' Development Program (OPDP).