



11th UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Item 10: Future work of the Expert Mechanism, including focus on next annual study.
Presented by: Ghazali Oforella, July 2018

Expert members, State representatives, Indigenous relatives, ladies and gentlemen,

I address this mechanism, in my capacity as co-chair of the Indigenous Peoples Caucus convened under the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC). The IIPFCC was established in 2008, as a convening space for the Indigenous Peoples attending the sessions of the Conference of Parties, inter-sessional meetings of its subsidiary bodies, and other United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) related meetings.

We welcome the next thematic study of the Expert Mechanism on the topic of migration, displacement and borders while preserving the rights of Indigenous Peoples, which is very relevant in the context of climate change.

Since time immemorial, Indigenous Peoples have been resilient and have fought the negative impacts of environmental changes through our traditional knowledge and livelihoods ranging from living in harmony with the ocean in Kiribati, to reindeer herding in the plains and mountains of the Arctic, though we are concerned with the unforgiving impacts of climate change on our sovereignty, communities, territories, environments, cultures and traditional knowledge systems, particularly melting tundra, desertification and drought, hurricanes and others are after rising sea levels to be most comprehensive of current realities that threaten our ways of life and our ancestral lands.

In relation to the impacts of climate change, migration will negatively transform Indigenous societies as a whole, with the potential loss of our ancestral lands, and extinction of some Indigenous Peoples. Therefore, migration due to climate change is for many if not most Indigenous Peoples the final option. In his opening remarks of the workshop on climate change induced migration that occurred June 21-22 in Funafuti, Tuvalu, The Right Honourable Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Enele Sosene Sopoaga said it best: "Relocation will not solve climate change...running away will not save the islands...it is the final option".

In case of migration, the inherent and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples must be fully respected, protected and fulfilled if they choose to relocate or be displaced due to climate change. Though we argue that migration, within the context of climate change the terms 'refugee', and 'migrant' are often loosely coupled with the words 'climate change' or 'environment' to describe people that are forced to move as a result of the impacts of climate change.

Though, when dealing with international legal frameworks, concepts such as refugee, and migrant already define a certain legal status and provide certain rights and protection to predetermined groups of people. The differences in these legal frameworks are fundamental. Labelling groups with a specific definition may either grant them some form of protection that they are not entitled to or deprive them of certain protection or rights. It can also take away protection from other groups.

It is therefore, important to include and accurately contextualize the issue to climate change induced displacement of Indigenous Peoples so that it can include the full respect and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples in all scenarios.

Therefore, we request the EMRIP to:

- To include in its study ways and means for the promotion and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples displaced domestically and across borders due to climate change with a view to the preservation of their inherent rights to inter alia sovereignty, territories, environments, cultures and traditional knowledge systems as enshrined in the UN Declaration.

Thank you Madame Chair.