

UN Forum on Minority Issues, Geneva, 15-16 December 2008
Statement of the associations of the Batwa and Bambuti minorities from the Great Lakes countries (DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda) with the support of Minority Rights Group International

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Madam President,

The Batwa and Bambuti minorities in the Great Lakes region (DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda) are among the poorest and most discriminated communities. This poverty does not facilitate the access to basic needs, such as education. Decade-long conflicts in the region have worsened their situation, in particular with respect to the displacements of families with children, rape and sexual violence against school-age minority children.

When families have the possibility to provide school education to a child, girls are discriminated against, which means that they face double discrimination.

We urge the UN Forum on Minority Issues to advocate the cause of the Batwa and Bambuti minorities in the Great Lakes region to their governments. We would like them to also include our following recommendations below regarding UN agencies into the final recommendations of the UN on Education.

1. To governments

- Apply signed and ratified conventions, covenants and agreements on the right to education ;
- Pass national laws in favour of the Batwa and Bambuti minorities ;

2. To the UN agencies

- Implement childcare strategies for displaced minority children, and in particular for girls ;
- Implement an affirmative action policy in favour of the Batwa and Bambuti minorities to improve their socio-economic situation, so as to facilitate their children's education.

Thank you, Madam President.

On behalf of the Batwa and Bambuti minorities associations, in the Great Lake region.

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Unissons nous pour la Promotion de Batwa (UNIPROBA)

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Union pour l'Emancipation de la Femme Autochtones (UEFA)

African Indigenous and Minority Peoples Organization (AIMPO)

Union Chrétienne pour l'Education et le Développement des Déshérités (UCEDD)