

The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation acknowledges the intrinsic challenges faced by minority populations in participating effectively in economic life.

Communities are often numerically small, geographically dispersed in rural areas from the centres of political and economic power. However as we have heard from many at this forum. These natural and expected challenges are exacerbated by exploitative tactics of powerful corporations and governments. This is most keenly felt in regions rich in natural resources, nor do communities bear the cost of resource extraction and development projects but they rarely share in the profits. The political and economic marginalisation of minority in these regions, leaves them without recourse for the economic, environmental and social damages wrought by such projects. This is a key inadequately addressed in the largely excellent draft paper.

Different forms of self-determination are a concrete step that could advance and build the capacity of minorities. As a start we suggest reference to the very basic concept of free prior and informed consent. Not only in the recommendations to governments but also those directed at the private business sector, IFI and development agencies. A second area requiring attention in the draft paper relates to paragraph 16 and 17. Indeed targeted approaches are necessary to address socio-economic exclusion of minorities and in order to do that, quality disaggregated data must be gathered. However several states do not allow minority groups to self-identify in their preferred manner. As an example the Batwa of Rwanda cannot call themselves that, they are instead constitutionally labelled as one of several historically marginalised communities, suggesting that they no longer suffer discrimination and marginalisation. This has the effect of limiting targeting programmes to assist impoverished Batwa communities. If communities cannot identify themselves in an accurate manner targeted affirmative action cannot take place.

Equally and very significantly the level and severity of discrimination cannot be monitored or addressed. The direct damage caused by resource theft is a fundamental barrier to the effective economic participation of minorities. Even more fundamental is the ability of groups to determine and declare their identity. If minorities are ever truly to achieve effective participation in economic life attention must be given to addressing these two issues. We therefore hope these points can be incorporated into the final recommendation paper.

Thank you!