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Some good practices

The Pygmy peoples living in the Democratic Republic of Congo are recognized by the Congo Government as the first inhabitants of the country, but no legal text is clear on this subject, which perpetuates their exclusion and makes them even more fragile. They are absent from national state institutions, being only locally present, they do not benefit from any governmental action.

Recommendation: The Congo government should prove its political willingness to integrate the Pygmies as citizens with full rights by adopting a specific law which guarantees and protects the rights of the Pygmy population.

The Pygmy peoples have today a commission at the level of ministry of environment which is in charge of domestic matters, where one counselor is a Pygmy. We appreciate the efforts of the government, but for us this is only the beginning and much more needs to be done. The examples of Rwanda and Burundi, neighbouring countries of the Democratic Republic of Congo, have adopted a system of quotas for the representation of the Batwa.

The Congo government should adopt a quota system to boost Pygmies' representation, especially of Pygmy women in public institutions – Parliament, Senate, as well as all the ministries.

The RDG Forest Code recognizes local populations. The code establishes that, besides the forests that are classified as reservations and the protected areas, community forests should also be created in favor of local populations, which would be managed by local populations. When celebrating the international day of indigenous peoples, at the opening and closing of the conference, his Excellency Mr. Minister of Environment clearly stated that from now on the Congo government promises to take care of Pygmies' problems and that they will be part of different processes to develop the country. In this code, Pygmy women are barely taken into account, first because the local community does not accept them, and then because of the law itself. Pygmy women are completely deprived of rights when the forest exploitation takes place without consulting them and they face immediate and humiliating expulsions.

Recommendation: the government should integrate not just the Pygmy peoples in the process beyond the second reform of the Forest Code which will take place next year, but should also implement special measures so that women are involved in the decisions related to the management and creation of protected areas.

Thank you.