

Global Rights on Item V

Male/English

Madam Chair, Madam Independent Expert, thank you for the opportunity to make a statement at this Forum. I'm representing Global Rights.

The 20th anniversary on the UN Declaration on the Rights of People Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities provides a seminal moment to pause and reflect on the challenges and problems encountered in the practical implementation of the Declaration and related issues of minorities in Uganda and across the world.

We would like to commend the Government of Uganda for the inclusion of a progressive provision recognising the rights of minorities in Uganda in its constitution under Article 36.

Uganda is a widely diverse country with over 30 million people with no dominant group, but never the less, existence of minority groups such as the Batwa in Southwestern Uganda and the Benet in the east. Despite the progressive constitutional provision the issue of ethnic minorities is invisible and not well articulated at the national level and have been largely marginalizes and neglected in development plans.

To this end, Global Rights Uganda gets generous support from the Ford Foundation commissioned a desk study determine the human rights issues faced by ethnic minorities in our country, which intends to present the UN Independent Expert in this Forum. The report identifies that there is very little awareness of the UN Declaration and other related international and regional human rights instruments among the majority of our citizens and especially among ethnic minorities. Uganda does not have a coherent legal policy to implement international human right provisions for protection of ethnic minorities. There's no definition and conceptual understanding of who constitutes a minority, and minorities are not well represented in decision-making bodies at national and local government levels, and ethnic minorities have limited access to essential services, such as health, education and lack of control of productive assets as for example land. The human rights status of a few minorities remains dyer, and there's need for considered efforts by all stakeholders to highlight the plight of ethnic minorities.

We therefore recommend that national human rights and regional bodies such as the Uganda Human Rights Commission and the [...] Commission to conduct training programs on the Declaration within the country to ensure knowledge and visibility of the Declaration and related international human rights instruments with specific focus on ethnic minorities. The government should adopt a national policy on ethnic minorities that incorporates provisions of the Declaration and using the UN Declaration as a guide, the government should mainstream issues of ethnic minorities in development plans and policies.

Thank you for you kind attention.