

36th session of the Human Rights Council
Annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective throughout the
work of the Human Rights Council and that of its mechanisms

Mister Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A Human rights activist from the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, I take the floor today on behalf of the Society for Threatened Peoples to stress that the processes of institutionalising the respect for international human rights and bolstering efforts to promote the economic, social and cultural rights of women can be mutually reinforcing if done correctly. But I would like to put the spotlight here on the necessity for the HRC and its mechanisms to pay closer attention to the rights of indigenous and underrepresented women to ensure that gender equality is not only promoted as institutional practice, but that the intersecting issues of gender and being a minority are also observed. The double discrimination faced by underrepresented women today create multiple forms of barriers in society, as is the case for the women of Ogaden.

In order for this issue to be tackled correctly, there is a critical need for the UPR process to be more focused on the rights of nations and peoples. Indeed, because the right to self-determination is recognized in international law as a right of process but is not yet achieved, many States which are host to different nations and peoples have a history of conflict, unsettlement and issues around contested borders.

It is also widely recognized as highlighted in the introduction of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that compliance with the right of self-determination is a fundamental condition for the enjoyment of other human rights, including gender equality. The Ogaden region in Ethiopia is a classic example of this where conversations around self-determination and fundamental freedoms are directly linked to achieving gender equality.

While the UPR provides a unique opportunity for states to report on their progress in upholding human rights including gender rights, in such contexts it isn't necessarily impactful. An independent body is thus needed which could report on the progress of those states regarding gender issues. The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides the HRC with independent expertise and advice on the rights of indigenous peoples as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Perhaps a similar mechanism can be introduced specifically for gender issues, which would constitute a progress both in terms of gender promotion but also for the advancement of the right to self-determination, prominently embodied in the first article of the Charter of the United Nations.

Thank you