

Indigenous Peoples

Land, Environment and Racism



**a report from Workshop for
Indigenous Peoples from West Africa**

held in Presbyterian Women's Center Abokobi, Ghana

April 7th - 10th 2001

Poem

*I am "Asaase Yaa" – the woman born on a Thursday!
Provider of all you need to live.
I mean Provider acclaimed by your ancestors of old
Even as you now jubilate or fight,
Over remnants of what I fed your ancestors on.*

*I am "Asaase Yaa" – a woman full of riches,
Most beautiful, elegant yet full of love for you.
Some call me Mother Earth - owner of all riches.
Others describe me as land sustaining all sustenance.
I accept the name Land if my worth deserves the name.
I am the Land who
Loves you,
Adores all mankind,
Nurtures all that live without discrimination.*

*I am the Land whom you must hold so dear to your hearts while
you live.
Even unto the time, you breathe your last.
And seek eternal rest in my bosom.
I am the Land who gives you life.
Do not kill me first before you die after me!*



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ACRONYMY

AIWO	:	African Indigenous Women Organization
WCC	:	World Council of Churches
CCG	:	Christian Council of Ghana
CCSL	:	Christian Council of Siera Leone
UDHR	:	UN Declaration of Human Rights
IIN	:	Indigenous Information Network
UNCED	:	United Nations Centre for Environment and Development
EMIROAF	:	Ethnic Minority and Indigenous Rights Organization of Africa.
IMF	:	International Monetary Fund.
SAPEDH	:	African Service For Peace and Human Rights.
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Profit
OIPA	:	Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Africa
IPACC	:	Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co- ordinating Committee
IPS	:	Indigenous Peoples
EPA	:	Enviromental Protection Agency
SAPS	:	Structural Adjustment Programmes

Forward

Bishop Eugenio Poma Anaguaya
World Council of Churches

The Indigenous Peoples Programme of the World Council of Churches cooperates with regional and national council of churches, Indigenous organizations and communities to clarify the past and present issues of denial, destruction and denigration of Indigenous spiritualities and ancestral values by dominant cultures. The most critical issue is the dispossession and destruction of the land on which Indigenous Peoples build and develop their lives and their spiritualities.

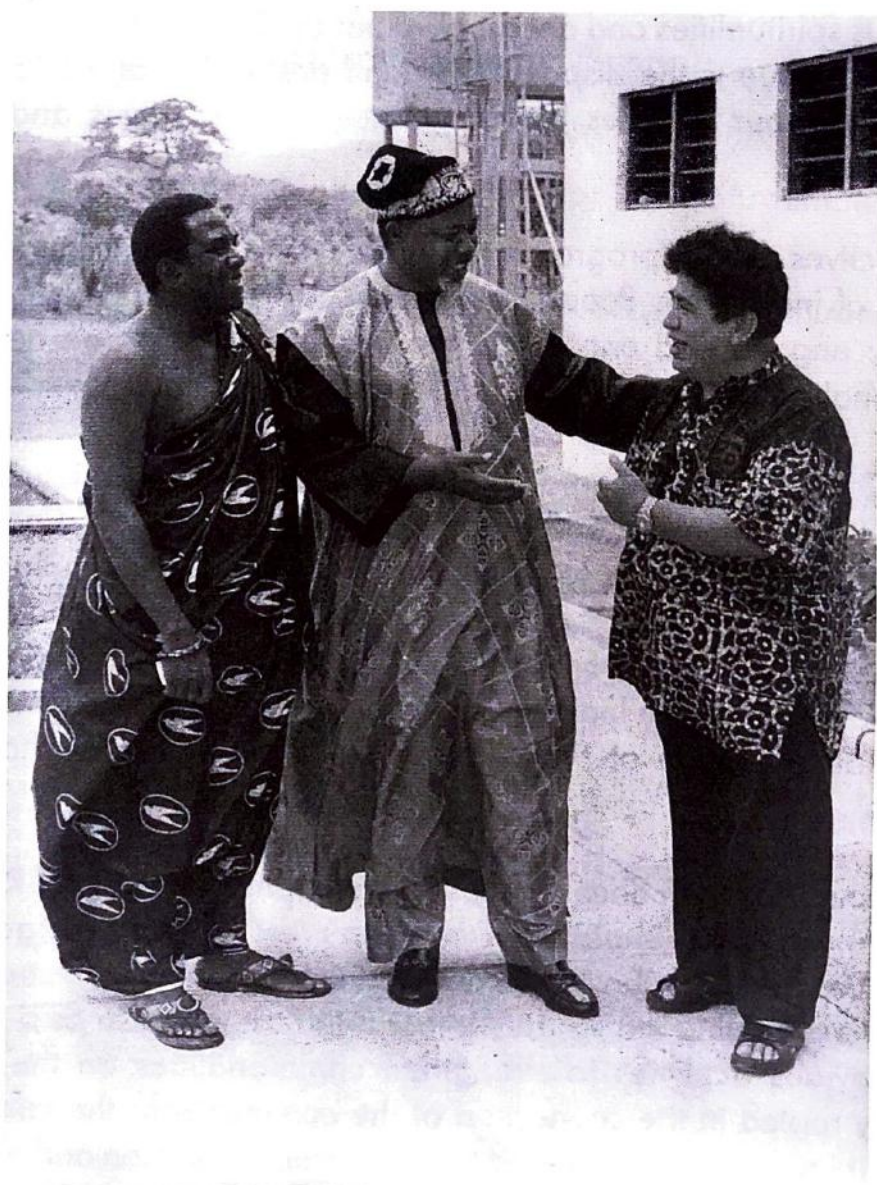
The objectives of the programme are to ensure that the issues and concerns of Indigenous Peoples be addressed by the churches and by doing so; engage and encourage the member churches on national and regional levels and to work in solidarity with Indigenous communities.

The WCC has been working on the concerns of Indigenous issues with the Botswana, Zimbabwe and Rwanda Church Councils and national indigenous organizations to address the issue of Land, indigenous spirituality and human rights issues in Africa. It is clear what land means for Africans as Z. Nkosi from South Africa has said, "While Land is a birthright of every African Indigenous person, it has communal dimension whereby all members of the community are expected to share its resources".

The workshop of Indigenous Peoples on Land, Environment and Racism was planned to be a platform for the West African Indigenous communities and churches to come together for sharing the struggles and visions on caring the land, "Mother Earth". It was also as a follow up to previous activities to strengthen commonalities on the deep spirituality rooted in the connection of the community to the land and how this unique view is threatened by environment pollution and racism. The direct participation of the Ghana Christian Council and the Indigenous Information Network from Kenya were vital for the success

of the workshop, without their knowledge of the people, culture and vision we could not have had the present report.

We are also very thankful for all participants who have contributed with their stories and present context analysis of the situation in their home countries. By reading this report, we hope the indigenous communities, churches and the civil society will address the issue of the land, environment and its relation to racism. Action can be taken during the frame of the upcoming World Conference Against Racism and within the International Decade of Indigenous Peoples, in order to ensure the source of life for many generations to come.



Prince Kwame, Hon. Somanah III and Bishop Poma.

Introduction

Lucy Mulenkei

Indigenous Information Network.

The essential goods and services on our planet depend on the variety and variability of genes, species, populations and ecosystems. Biological resources feed and clothe us. They provide housing, medicine and spiritual nourishment. Those resources are found in natural ecosystems of forests, savannahs, pastures and rangelands, deserts, rivers, lakes and seas. They are also in farm fields, gardens, gene banks, botanical gardens and zoos. Most of all, these are found in Indigenous Peoples' lands. In the past decade, Indigenous Peoples have seen the encouragement to their lands and continues destruction of the Environment. This has caused the loss of the world's biological diversity and overall destruction of Mother Earth. It is for this cause that Indigenous Peoples of West Africa in collaboration with leaders from different Churches decided to meet together to discuss ways of reducing the destruction.

Even though the subjects of discussions were Land, Environment and Racism, land and the environment took most of the time in the discussions. Racism did not feature a lot because this is a concept that most Indigenous Peoples are trying to understand. It is our hope that as they participate in the forthcoming world Conference on racism to be held in Durban South Africa in September 2001, more light can be drawn on the importance of the issue. The three-day workshop was convened by the World Council of Churches (WCC), Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and the Indigenous Information Network (IIN). The participants were drawn from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Togo, Nigeria, Niger, Sierra Leone, Phillipines, Bolivia and Mali.

The objectives were:

- 1) To examine the threats of land, environment and the interconnection with racial discrimination.
- 2) To share and reflect on the spiritual relationship between Indigenous Peoples of West Africa, Land and Environment.
- 3) To identify effective land and environment conservation practices at local levels and to compare them with policies or standards at national and international levels.

- 4) To draw challenges for churches and indigenous organizations to play an active role in the work against racism, especially environmental racism.

The workshop was very participatory and key presenters were able to share with the participants very effectively. It was very interactive and all denominations fitted very well, *Muslims and Christians working together for a common goal. Our cultures and traditions brought us together spiritually regardless of where we came from.* The workshop was also a learning process for most participants, they heard about other countries with similar problems to those of their own. It also brought hope and a better understanding on issues of Indigenous Peoples and the importance of their participation at the local, national, regional and international levels.

All presentations were very interesting. In the welcoming remarks, Mr. Edwin Branes, Chief Director of the Ministry of environment, science and technology of Ghana, gave participants guidance what can be done as follows:

Be active participants in local and national programmes for promoting good environmental stewardship;

- The Church should be more actively involved in addressing poverty issues;
- Noise from church activities should be critically examined since noise is also a major environmental problem not only affecting man but also some other living resources;
- The Church should encourage its members to undertake positive environmental activities – tree planting, cleaning around homes, assisting fellow Christians to appreciate the important gift that the Lord has given us;
- Helping to prevent wars and other activities leading to social dislocation of people and thus affecting environment;
- The Church should ensure that as a body, it abides by national laws, especially those that have a bearing on good environmental management.

A welcome address by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Justice Ofei Akrofi was a welcome that took the participants through history of the efforts by different Indigenous Peoples

and their relation to land. This presentation was well complemented by Baffour D. Amoa who tried as much to define the issue of discussion in order to create awareness to the participants the importance of understanding a word and how it relates to our daily life. It is at the same time when he well related social, economic, political and religious issues on land, environment and racism and the effect of globalization.

The presentation of Rev. Dr. Robert Aboagye-Mensah, General Secretary Christian Council of Ghana, put the participants in a village setting in northern Region of Ghana. Like any African traditional setting, it highlights the situation of women in most of Indigenous peoples cultures. They do not own land nor any property. This is a presentation that touches the heart and gives you history, which needs review. The Bible verses he provides keeps you on your toes to reflect on the past, present and future. This is clearly complemented by Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Asante on his topic *Land and its relationship to the peoples spirituality*. He took us to a journey of explaining how important Mother Earth is and how important it is for us to protect it. His quotations from the Bible tell us how sacred mother Earth is and so should not be at any time under threat.

The full Presentations have been published in the report.

Apart from key presentations there were country papers, which have been, published in ANNEX 1 of the report. There were also different group discussions and recommendations after which the participants concluded with a declaration which is also included in this report.

Discussions and outcomes.

Root Causes of the Destruction of the Environment and its Relation to Racism

1. Why Africa? Colonisation and now, globalisation, have immensely contributed, if not one of the roots of the problems in Africa. Today, for example, the production of goods (i.e. cut flowers, cash crops) for export and not for the consumption of the producing community is eroding the self-sustaining economies of Africa. This is generally true for most countries of the Third World.
2. The heavy influx of Western cultural influence has also changed societies dramatically, thereby also affecting traditional ways of conservation. Another factor is the artificial boundaries created by the process of creating

modern forms of states from the era of colonisation. This has, in some cases, separated people from the same communities into different countries leading to the disintegration of their communities.

3. Racism is a by-product of lack of respect for the other. A view was expressed that the Church, in some cases, has also been a promoter of racism. It was argued that this was not an official policy of the Church. For Christians, racism is sin. In recent times in fact, the Church has been very active, if not, in the forefront in the campaign against racism.
4. The discrimination within black communities in Africa should not be overlooked. While clear-cut black-white racism remains to this day, the reality of racism against Indigenous Peoples must also be recognised especially in cases where the perpetrators of this type of racism are of the same skin colour as in the case of the Batwas in Rwanda.
5. We must also be careful not to refer to Africa as simply Black Africa as it is a reality that there are other people in Africa, people who also suffer racism, who cannot be really ascribed to as black.
6. Traditional values should be restored. For instance, the traditional banning of fishing on some days has proved to be sustainable. Other traditional ways of conservation should also be studied as they may prove to be more useful than modern practices of conservation.
7. We must not only educate and study our problems. We must look for solutions.

Land and its Relationship to the Peoples' Spirituality

1. Land is for the living and the unborn. Land is owned by God. We have a responsibility to utilise the land wisely as this property is owned by God. Legislators should make laws that reflect this.
2. While there is a perceived conflict between Christianity and traditional African religion, the attitude should be that all people, regardless of their faith, can make a contribution. While the churches are beginning to recognise their mistakes in terms of undermining traditional religious practices, traditional religion practitioners should also be open to criticism and dialogue. Related to this, a warning was raised against romanticism, both to traditional African religion and traditional conservation practices especially since it is difficult to determine who really practices authentic and traditional African religion.

3. In response to the question of modern vs. traditional concepts of conservation, it was raised that what is needed is to study the scientific values of the practices of our ancestors and to integrate these with modern conservation practices. Modernity should also not be simply equated with Christianity, as this is a fallacy.
4. Through history, people were only able to preserve their faiths by practising it. Today, this is all the more significant. If people are only faithful to their religion, then humanity would surely be able to preserve not only itself but also its environment.
5. The need to act here and now was raised several times. Not until we begin to act and fight for ourselves can we truly take care of our land and environment and thus our life. We cannot just theologise, make our masters and PhD's, have meetings and conferences. We must act. Here And Now.

Suggestions for solutions to the question of Land Degradation, Environmental Protection and Ecotourism as a tool to Community Development.

1. Bring the Indigenous People/Rural Communities to partner governments and the private sector to sit at the conference table to come to a workable conclusion for a lasting solution to the nagging problems of the Indigenous people; Land, Environment and Racism.
2. Government should come out with policies and set up some machinery to oversee the working of such laws on Land Degradation and Environmental Protection. These laws must be enforced in Africa just as such laws work in Switzerland and in other countries. There must be some order in our leadership.
3. Governments should promote Ecotourism very vigorously to let its positive impact be felt by the Indigenous/Rural communities. Most of the best tourism attraction sites are with the indigenous people and Ecotourism shall give tourists as well as the community their due.
4. Check Globalization Power and its fast spreading negative money menace among the rural communities – Abandon some of the western influences and help promote traditional environmental conservation methods as had persisted from centuries back till today.

5. The African leader must learn to be selfless and refuse to believe that his office is a goldmine where politicians only come to enrich themselves. Political office holders must be told in simple straightforward terms that they are in office to serve as responsible stewards and be accountable to the people for whose wealth (through their own sweat) they are only custodians and not any owners.
6. Transparency must be brought to bear on governments in their formulation of land Laws so that the community could contribute to the educational programme towards the enforcing of such laws to cover everybody.
7. Increased investment in Education so that policies could be easily understood by all. Good governance can only stand firm when the population base is given education. Free and compulsory education (to at least the basic level) is advocated.
8. Set up committees to advise government on land and racism questions as elaborated at this conference.



African Indigenous Women Organization members attending the workshop.

Conception(s) About Land from A Multi-Religious Perspective(s)

- Land as primary source of life. Those of land possession (acquisition):- It helps to inform the attitude and believe of people about the land and in the land.
- Level of dogmatism: - Capacity to adapt to situations for successful achievement of goals.
 - ◆ The Church needs to examine its attitude about and the relation with indigenous people and to help cement bridges for good co-existence for mutual benefit.
 - ◆ The Church needs to see itself as partner in a complimentary manner for the actualization of dreams of indigenous to protect the land.
 - ◆ This way the Church needs to play a proactive role in preparing the indigenous by
- 1. Helping them build the capacity to appreciate progressive views about the land,
- 2. Helping them to come abreast with the numerous legal regimes that exist with the express aim of preventing environmental degradation
- 3. Helping them build negotiating capacity.
 - ◆ The Church needs to work itself into traditional authorities to mutually develop and execute environmental propriety and land sustaining programmes.
 - ◆ Church should also embark on ecological ecumenism: - Manner left for church strategies eg. Ecological evangelism.

Those of you who could like to have more information on particular presentation please get back to iin@iin.co.ke and epa@wcc-coe.org

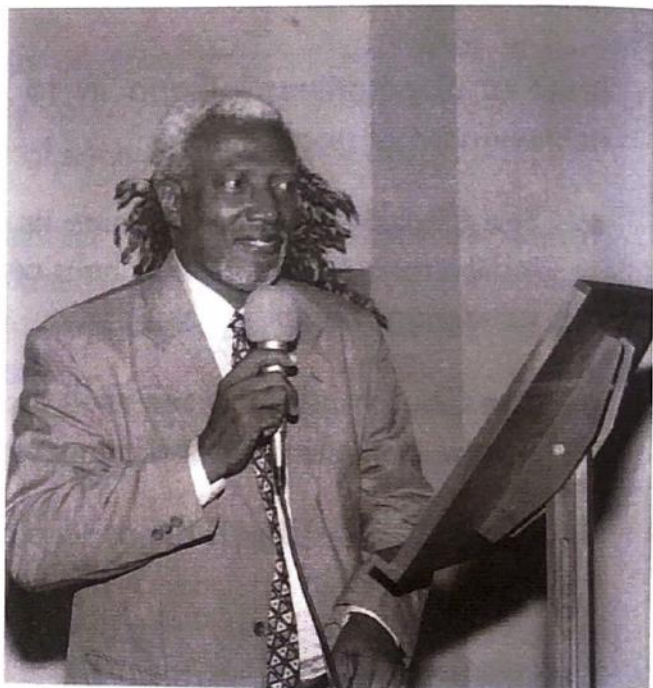
Keynote Address

Let me first apologise on behalf of the Hon. Minister for Environment, Science and Technology for his inability to be here with you this morning. This is because of other affairs of State to which he had been previously committed. I hope I will be worthy substitute to this August gathering.

From the story of the creation, we read that God created the land and all the things that are in it plants, animals and of f course, man (and woman). Man was given responsibility of taking care of this beautiful creation of the Lord. As part of this management, man was to use the land and all that it contained for his well-being.

What has man done to the land and its resources in the efforts at development – destruction everywhere. Trees are felled indiscriminately, mining leads to the degradation of the environment, factories spew all kinds of gases into the atmosphere, water bodies are being polluted with all kinds of chemicals. Beautiful hills that the Lord has provided us at least to enjoy are all being destroyed in the name development.

We have given the impression that we have either forgotten or have refused to accept God's admonishment to us to take good care f what he has provided us. We behave as very bad stewards of what has been put under our care. We would even have found acceptance in God's eyes if, as in the parable of the Talents, we had just decided to leave the land as we found it and thus not done anything to it.



Mr. Edwin Barnes Chief Director, Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology giving a keynote address on behalf of the Hon. Minister for Environment, Science and Technology, Prof. Foblih

There has been a continuing debate between the developers and the environmentalist. To the former, nothing is sacred. Get rid of what stands in the way of development. To the environmentalist, leave the world as it is and look for other means of addressing the development agenda. Of course, there is a need for a middle ground which says that you can develop and at the same time ensure that the integrity of the environment is maintained. This is what is broadly called sustainable development – development which care not only the needs of today but also those of future generations.

Of course, we live in a world where we have some 20% of the population using about 80% of the world's resources in a manner which is generally said to be unsustainable. The implication is that this group of people do not care very much about what they have to consume. It is their personal desires which matter to them. They throw away substantial resources which could adequately serve the needs of the other 80% of the population. They have all the technologies, all the exciting gadgets, the most gas guzzling vehicles, etc.

We have recently heard from the president of the United States of America about the issue of climate change. To most people it sounds like something that cannot and will not happen in their lifetime. Of course, we are seeing its effects globally. There was time that the weather pattern in this country could easily be predicted by farmers. Now it is difficult. In Europe we are either having some of the coldest or hottest days of the year. Floods are in places where they are not expected – Mozambique, United Kingdom, etc. Droughts are also being observed where we expect to have rains – Kenya.

Poverty also has a negative impact on the environment and its resources – water, land, forests, forest products. Desertification – in the north, what are the major causes? Lack of knowledge.

The church definitely has a role to play in ensuring that we protect our environment which has been put in our hands by God.

Unfortunately, it is man who is creating all the problems associated with environment. As indicated earlier our quest to develop is one aspect of this. The other relates to people who have no ownership of the land on which they live. They seem not to have any responsibility and thus do not care what they do to the land. Indigenous people who know the value of the land are moved away from their land and migrants take over. Another group of people who also create problems on the land are refugees. Examples in this part of the world are there for everyone to see – Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, Angola and

Burundi. Even in this country in Ghana land resources are lost without any one being worried – the issue of environmental security.

With all that has happened, I wonder if the Good Lord will be satisfied with the world as it is today. The Church and Christians have a role to play in ensuring that the Garden of Eden which God created comes back into our lives. What are some of the things that can be done?

1. Be active participants in local and national programmes for promoting good environmental stewardship;
2. The Church should be more actively involved in addressing poverty issues;
3. Noise from church activities should be critically examined since noise is also a major environmental problem not only affecting man but also other living resources.
4. The Church should encourage its members to undertake positive environmental activities such as tree planting, cleaning around homes, assisting fellow Christians to appreciate the important gift that the Lord has given us;
5. Helping to prevent wars and other activities leading to social dislocation of peoples and thus affecting environment;
6. The church should ensure that as a body it abides by national laws, especially those that have a bearing on good environmental stewardship.

I wish you good workshop and hope that as we move towards the tenth year of the Rio Earth Summit, the results of this workshop will help in developing the environmental agenda for the next decade.

Thank you and God bless us all.

Worship Bible Reflection

Rev. Dr. Robert Aboagye-Mensah

General Secretary, Christian Council of Ghana

Our reflection this morning is based on a poem which is the voice of an indigenous woman of Ghana, and on some Biblical passages from Romans and the prophet Amos.

In October of 1999 the Very Rev. Dr. Garbrah, Chairman of the Board of Friends of the Earth - Ghana, wrote this:



Rev Dr Robert Aboagye Mesah, Dr. E. Asante all of Bishop Eugenio Poma of WCC, Lucy Mullenkei IIN and Mr. Degraf of CCG taking a break from the meeting.

AMINA (a poem on desertification from Northern Ghana)

I am Amina,
A middle aged woman.
I am a housewife;
For some this marriage label means that I am unemployed.
But am I unemployed?
My back is my baby's pram,
I have to keep the six moths old there often;
Sometimes,

When cooking
And carrying water on my head more than one mile,
When plastering the walls of our round hut complex,
When washing clothes and dishes,
When walking to the farm
With my husband Musa following on his bicycle,
When collecting firewood for cooking,
And when burning charcoal.
Maybe I can be described as unemployed,

Because
I receive no remuneration
For all the work I do.
From dawn into the night.

My village is Wulugu
In the West Mamprusi District
Of the Northern Region of Ghana.
As a woman I cannot own land,
Yet my marriage commitment
Requires that
I feed six mouths
And support three children in school.
I farm on Musa's land;
What happens to the farm if Musa dies before I die?
Or if Musa takes another wife, now that I am ageing?

I collect firewood from Musa's land,
I cut trees on Musa's land
To burn into charcoal
I cut, and cut, and cut.
Yet I know that every tree I cut
Leaves a footprint for
Monstrous Dessertification- my enemy;
But what else can I do to earn money?
NOTHING!

Poor Amina,
I cannot hire labour to clear the land,
So I set a bush fire;
Then comes monstrous and cheeky Dessertification
Riding on the flames,
While I run and run and run away.

Last year my sister was trapped
By the flames,
I can suffer the same fate
Any time.
Hmmm.

If I had poisoned darts,
I would shoot at this monster

*That dries up the streams,
That drives dusty winds into my eyes
And blows the top soil away,
The heartless monster
That dictates what we eat,
And has enslaved me
To work for it,
Because,
I lack knowledge,
I am poor,
I have no alternative income generating capabilities,
Tradition is against me,
And the law does not offer me adequate protection.
Hmmm.*

Who will come to my aid?

Amina can well be described as belonging to the indigenous peoples. Her social, political, cultural life and her belief system, indeed her very survival, depend on her close identification with the land. It is clear when we look at the world, that a balanced relationship with the land and the whole of creation is essential to all indigenous people.

We may also argue that Amina's story when transposed onto the world's stage reflects the culture of male dominance. Tradition says that Amina cannot legally own the land she works; for the simple reason that, she is a woman. She is the apparent beneficiary as she produces her crops and tries to provide for her children, but she is struggling under her intolerable burden of poverty.

Where the essential link between the land and every other dimension of life is interrupted by unjust political, economic and racially induced poverty, then the whole of meaningful human existence is under threat.

Amina needs to clear more land by burning the bush for farming to meet her needs, even though she knows that this is a destructive method. But what can she do if she can't afford to pay someone to clear the land in a more ecologically friendly way?

This problem of burning off the bush for all kinds of reasons: preparing it for farming, for hunting, for building, is common but disastrous to the fertility of the land. Not only that, but it leads to the desertification which causes drought in the longer term. Consequently regular reliable water supply becomes a problem.

Here in Ghana we hear that some of the mighty rivers we once knew as children are drying up, for example the Rive Tano, which flows through Brong Ahafo region. Destruction of the forests by legal and illegal logging leads to the same problems. Drainage from mines leads to pollution of the already hard-pressed water supplies. If pollutants escape into the environment, they can endanger human health and have devastating effects on plant and animal life.

This pressure on the environment is spoken of in Romans 8:19-22 which tells how creation was subjected to frustration, not of its own choice. Creation comes under bondage and in fact, the whole of creation groans as going through the pain of childbirth. The creation is struggling under exploitation by mankind.

In such situations, the indigenous people often derive very little benefit from their labours. Is it not so on the global level? People are toiling but in fact, profits often belong to someone else. How many indigenous people are now producing foodstuffs which they cannot eat themselves, but are dictated by a global market economy controlled by multinational corporations based in the West? Indeed, they can hardly produce the food they really need to survive, because such foods are not considered as contributing directly to the national economy because they do not attract foreign exchange. So for example, instead of staple foods being produced to feed the population of Kenya, vast acres of prime land are used to cultivate flowers for the European market, decorating dining tables or funeral parlours.

Those who reap economic benefit from this type of commerce, have little feeling or sympathy for the poor and the weak. They are far removed from their situation. The measures, which are prescribed for 'structural adjustment' and 'poverty alleviation', only compound the poverty trap into which they have pushed the needy.

Amos 8:4-10 described the situation graphically:

Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, "When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat? — skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat"

The LORD has shown by the Pride of Jacob: "I will never forget anything they have done. Will not the land tremble for this, and all who live in it

mourn? The whole land will rise like the Nile; it will be stirred up and then sink like the river of Egypt.

"In that day," declares the Sovereign LORD, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your religious feasts into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day."

Structural sin in which the rich and powerful exploit and oppress the weak and the poor has its effect on the environment itself. As Amos 8:8 says, "Will not the land tremble for this; and all who live in it mourn? The whole land will rise like the Nile; it will be stirred up and then sink like the river of Egypt."

Theologically speaking, the mismanagement of the environment affects not only human beings and their future, but also the future of the whole of creation. In the same vein the redemption of human beings is linked with freeing creation from corruption and decay as the following biblical passages indicate. In Genesis 3, human sin leads to the curse of the earth. In the time of Noah, corruption of the human race led to the destruction of the whole creation by the flood. 1 Kings 16:29 - 17:1 records how human sin led to drought and famine during the time of Elijah.

However, one of the dominant visions in the Bible is the restoration of the creation – God's desire to create a new earth and a new heaven, as found in the books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, 1 Peter, and Revelation. In Romans 8:20-22, whole of creation is waiting impatiently for the day when human redemption will lead to their enjoyment of total freedom.

What then is the challenge presented to us through this conference?

It is not God's will that the situation remains as it is. We are to work for change. In fact we as the Church need to change. We need to change our tolerance of and collusion with unjust systems and structures of oppression. That means we are to catch God's vision for social and personal transformation. We need to be prepared to be God's instruments for change.

May God give us his grace to be the change we want, in order to bring glory to his name.

Setting of Objectives

Eugenio Poma Anaguaya

Executive Secretary, WCC Indigenous Peoples Program

I would like to express my appreciation to the CCG for being our host to convene this workshop on "Indigenous Peoples: Land, Environment and Racism" convened by World Council of Churches (WCC), Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and Indigenous Information Network (IIN) and you as men and women from this part of West Africa. Your stories and life experiences in particular your struggles against threats to life and nature such as environmental racism and forest exploitation will be the center of our dialogue. These stories will be a contribution for churches and Indigenous communities to continue the struggle before and after the upcoming World Conference Against Racism.

World Council of Churches and Programme to Combat Racism

The Indigenous Peoples Programme comes for the first time and it is hoped that other meetings of this kind will take place in the future, in which as a programme, we will continue to accompany if necessary. As you already are informed by the letter of invitation, the work of the World Council of Churches on racism had been ongoing for more than 30 years. Since 1968, the WCC has played a significant role within the international anti-apartheid movement and extended solidarity and its resources to thousands of indigenous and racially oppressed communities and organizations and those who work with them in almost every part of the world. This has been one of the major ministries of the WCC. However, racism continues to permeate in our societies and has infact evolved into a much more complex issue with various facets. From a very visible and clear cut white racism which has been seen in the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, the issue of racism has evolved into a more complicated and thus more difficult level where it is very well alive but is disguised or even thought to be non-existent. It is thus much more urgent now that the issue of race, with all its diverse forms, be continuously studied and combated.

Indigenous Peoples, Land and Environment

For those who come fro outside Africa, we hear, see and read that the continent is no longer the green forest, flourishing savannahs, clean rivers, fresh air, where the African wild life and the people live together. It seems that this is the past.

We now hear about the loss of land, its productivity being one of the most pressing problems, leaving both the people and the wildlife impoverished. I am sure we will hear more in this workshop.

African Indigenous brothers and sisters who participate in different activities of the WCC and the international events affirm that African Indigenous Peoples as anywhere else, continue living with the vision of direct relationship with land, nature and the whole creation. This relationship is affected by the increasing globalization of the economy, the environmental degradation of the living spaces of many of the world's peoples. Indigenous Peoples, whether in Aotearoa-New Zealand, Bolivia, West Paupau, Canada, Norway, India, Botswana, Ghana or Greenland or some other place face the threat of losing the land due to projects of: mining, wildlife conservation, logging, hydro-electric dams, miniaturization, forced displacement for the benefit of tourism and other "development" projects. Equally threatened by these are their languages and traditional ways of life. The colonially drawn up boundaries in the process of creating modern forms of states has fragmented and interfered with the way of life of Indigenous Peoples. Even their most sacred sites have not been exempted from desecration.

Land as human sustenance

Land is the basis without which creation of humanity could not have been possible. The book of exodus tells the story of a people that is in a journey for the land. It is a story of the promised land in which the creator and his presence is vital. FOR indigenous Peoples around the world, land is a source of food, medicine, tools shelter and is a hunting place and a burial ground. Peoples spiritualities are linked to the land (mother Earth). Land is seen as a whole being by itself not as an object that can be manipulated, exploited and sold for profit.

Social changes of modern forms of life bring with it good but also evil. On the one hand, Christianity brought to Indigenous communities new experiences. These are true among the Aymara communities in the Andes. There, some evil traditional practices were put down and developed into new forms which helped the people live harmoniously and also warn about new emerging situations due to the process of liberation. On the other hand, the same Christianity with the garb of Western culture has brought disastrous effects on the life of indigenous communities. In the case of the community where I belong to, we see the decline of indigenous socio-political systems and institutions (which have an egalitarian and collective character) for solving conflicts. We now see the struggle between individualism and collectivism.. Today we are so fragmented we are gradually losing even family ties.

It is no doubt that modernization has brought economic development and social progress and enhanced some people's consciousness of their dignity as human beings. But it has also brought mostly the fragmentation of indigenous communities leading to demoralization, specially among the young indigenous persons who are faced with heavy impact of the modern media. What is most critical is the misuse of the nature by the greed of the people.

In this meeting we must make sure ourselves, that we are not seeking the return for the past, the traditional way of life. We cannot do that. But we should strive to rework the traditional community values and its structures of moral responsibility for one another and integrate them with contemporary religious and social trends, so as to bring back the lost community life and contribute to society in building a just and holistic community. We must contribute to create a lifestyle which helps preserve the creation in particular for Indigenous peoples and the humanity as a whole, in general. In this venture, the Indigenous community is to renew their traditions and visions and re-interpret modernity in the light of this fact. So we as a small community should try to leave sighs for a land or earth-centered lifestyle and environment friendly culture.

Expected outcome

The continuing struggle for land and struggle against racism requires that the churches and indigenous organizations recognize and attempt to overcome these threats wherever it exists, making concrete efforts to combat them central to their lives. It means that awareness raising and training on these issues be promoted at all levels, particularly at local community and national levels. Along with our partners, we should strengthen and promote indigenous peoples rights to self-determination, land rights, spiritualities, culture, languages and intellectual property rights.

Objectives:

- To examine the threats to land, environment and the interconnection with racial discrimination.
- To share and reflect on the spiritual interconnectedness to land and environment of the people in the West Africa.
- To identify effective land and environment conservation practices at local levels and to compare them with policies or standards at national and international levels.
- To draw challenged for churches and indigenous organizations to play an active role in the work against racism, especially environmental racism.

Root causes of the destruction of the Environment and its relation to Racism

Baffour D. Amoah

Introduction

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word "destroy" as "pull or break down; kill; make useless; ruin financially; defeat."¹ For this type of action to occur somebody or something must be responsible. If we compare the energy and resources usually expended in the construction of a building or carrying and giving birth to a child, and those dispensed with in the act of destroying, the act of destroying cost very little or next to nothing. Yet society frowns on any act that seeks to destroy a person, a thing or a place and this is because the latter actions more often than not result in the loss of irreplaceable value to society. More so, the inherent injustice is unacceptable when the destroyer protects what he or she owns but goes all to destroy that which belongs to others.

In every human community, norms and values are developed to ensure that people, places and things are protected and not subjected to wanton destruction or even toyed with. Humanity recognises that the earth harbours many different forms of creation with life and the destruction of any type cannot be replaced hence the constant attempt at conservation and fight against people who take delight in destroying the resources of nature especially the human resource.

Several types of race exist and nature in its wisdom placed each race in an environment where they could survive. And yet, some found a way to enter the environment of others out of greed or sheer desire to conquer. Some races have therefore made life very difficult and painful for others and would not cease to do so. In the dictionary, racism is defined as "prejudice based on belief in superiority of particular race; antagonism towards other races."² Thomas Kyereh argues that distinctive cultural and physical characteristics determined by hereditary factors with its intrinsic sense of superiority is what racism thrives on.³ Mike Whitehead posits that [...] all people of all races need each other to

¹ Little Oxford Dictionary, seventh edition 1998

² Ibid.

³ Editor -in-Chief of Global Chana (1993), p.5

progress in this world of humans. Racism, discrimination, hatred of other people's colour stems from the lack of proper education about the integrity and capability of other people.⁴

Presently, the most punished human communities in the world are the poor of the world and worst are still the Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples are found mainly in Aotearoa-New Zealand, Bolivia, West Papua, Canada, Norway, India, Botswana, Greenland, Japan, Sweden, Finland and Guatemala. Other poor peoples in similar situations are those of African-descent and Blacks wherever they are found on this planet.

The conscience of society until recently relied heavily on the insights gained from humanity's belief in God. Today tensions in beliefs and faith systems have been created because of *Mammon*.

Science and technology have succeeded to dent the value of the human being in favour of money or profit. In other words, financial gains have a higher premium when compared with human life. Nonetheless, many believers in God continue to struggle against injustice and condemn people's inhumanity to others. Whether you are a religious person or not, it is a fact that our belief or spirituality informs our actions.

This paper is an attempt to highlight the root causes of environmental destruction and its relation to racism. It looks at the socio-economic, political and cultural factors that promote destruction of the environment and seeks to explain why the environment of certain communities suffer more than others (the racism factor). It also seeks to explain who the culprits are and the reasons for their actions. It also reminds us, particularly as Churches, why we are not allowed to sit on the fence but to critically engage the evil of racism and environmental destruction.

Social Factors

A critical observation of many communities and their environments reveal that population growth is one of the major causes of environmental destruction. Rural people as well as city dwellers survive on cooked meals and therefore cut down trees for the purpose. They need to grow food to feed the burgeoning population and therefore keep burning farmlands. In the process, some of them cause bushfires that spread and destroy acres upon acres of virgin lands and forests. Traditionally, there were norms and values which helped regulate

⁴ Ibid. p.8

people's behaviour as they tilled the land as well as hunt for animals. Presently, policies and regulatory measures are, to put it mildly, simply not respected.

Today, hunters walk through the bush jetting cigarette butts indiscriminately causing bushfires of untold proportions leading to the destruction of valuable and fertile lands. People need shelter so houses are built using timber, sand and stones, the procurement of which contributes to the damaging of the environment. Unfortunately, the traditional wisdom in building with great respect to the forest and land has given way to recklessness in the development of modern estates and implementation of other development programmes. Trees and forest areas are mowed down with no consideration for ecological damage and consequences. Development paradigms over the years have done little to improve the situation. Schools, universities, colleges, hospitals, etc are essential elements to modernisation so land is acquired for their construction, sometimes disrespecting the rules and plans of town planning offices.

Sporting activities help children to grow and infer community spirit through competitions and so land is taken to build playgrounds and sports stadium and as people flock to watch activities, the environment in some cases suffers degradation. Human consumption leaves in its trail tons of rubbish. Most of the time people do not care as to where they dump rubbish and so the environment gets polluted causing all sorts of illnesses on people. Rubbish is thrown into gutters, choking them and turning them into mosquito breeding grounds. Today, it is said that malaria has become the number one killer disease in the world.

In this process of losing resources of our environment, education becomes vital and strategic if the current trend of destruction is to be reversed or arrested.

Yet globalisation and market-oriented policies have hiked the cost of education to such an extent that illiteracy has become "lucrative" for the poorest of the poor. In the former times, it was more common to hear of the expression from the lips of people that "knowledge is power, ignorance is a disease". We need to double our efforts and intensify education of the poor and empower them to respect and protect the environment. Ongoing programmes in this direction appear to be cosmetic in many countries.

Economic Factors

The most devastating root cause of environmental destruction, in my view, is economic. Consequently, I tend to agree with those who see a direct relationship

between the increasing globalisation of the economy, environmental degradation and poverty. The wish of the Creator is that human beings work to keep His creation and not to laze around. And so every individual must earn his living at one time or the other.

The greatest book ever compiled, the Holy Scriptures, says,

"If a man will not work, he shall not eat. We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat"⁵

The issue here is not about the need to earn a living but how that living is earned. By which work ethics are we supposed to do that? In many places where Indigenous Peoples in particular and poor people in general live, oil, timber and minerals are extracted in ways that devastate ecosystems and destroys their culture and livelihood. The waste from both high and low technology industries, much of it toxic, must be disposed of somewhere and waste plants are often built in or near low-income living areas where there is a predominance of the world's poorest of the poor. This is done without any regard for their presence and livelihood whatsoever.⁶ "Timber merchants are rapidly deforesting the forest reserves of poor communities and hardly do they embark on any serious reforestation programmes.

Desertification looms over West Africa and in the name of economic development, people are being pushed by economic pressures and wars to behave in such ways that the process of desertification is being accelerated. Of course, one can argue that the timber merchants, the oil explorers and the mines owners are working to earn their living but at what cost to humanity and by what work ethics? It is therefore not surprising that industrialists argue against the concept of environmental racism claiming the reasons for putting their waste in minority areas are economic and not racial. Wealthier nations are also increasingly exporting their wastes to countries in the South. Unjust and unequal economic relation between the North and the South place the heavier burden of degradation of global environment on the South.⁷

In West Africa for instance, a lot of farm lands and community sources of water have been destroyed in the interest of mineral extraction, timber exportation, oil

⁵ The Devotional Study Bible 2 Th 3:10

⁶ Understanding Racism Today: A Dossier, a WCC Production, p.9

⁷ Ibid.

exploration and industrial development. Although these activities are undertaken to help nations obtain the urgently needed foreign currency to pay off debts, its management in most cases leaves a lot to be desired.

In Sierra Leone, ten years of civil war have been waged in the name of democracy but a critical analysis reveals that control over the diamond areas has been the main reason for the war. In Nigeria, especially around the Ogoni people's lands in the Niger Delta, the community lands have, in the name of oil extraction,,been devastated with little or no compensation. H.E. President Olusegun Obasanjo is today making every effort to seek justice on their behalf. In Ghana, mineral extractions have damaged vast areas of productive farmlands because of activities of licensed and unlicensed local and foreign mine operators. In the process, many indigenous peoples have been forced to shift to new locations amidst the pain of leaving their ancestors behind. In the towns where minerals are extracted, one experiences extreme poverty and environmental degradation. The rich exploiters have the technology to design vehicles and equipment that are able to withstand harsh roads and environmental conditions. Labour is exploited forcing people to further attack their environment indiscriminately just to make ends meet. It is therefore fair to endorse the assertion that "the division between the rich and the poor, between those who control resources and those who do not, between the dominant race and dominated races, has sharpened and become even more pronounced."⁸

Therefore, it is hoped that your discussions will help us deepen the ecumenical family's examination of the fundamental relationships of power and dominance, its impact on vulnerable communities and the implications for gender equality and justice.

In the hope of generating foreign exchange, tourism programmes have continued to flourish all over the Southern Hemisphere and West Africa has not been spared either. The quiet lives of indigenous peoples are significantly altered through enticement and at times, by coercion. Some are turned instantly into make shift hotels assistants, others in some cases are pushed into prostitution and children are left to fend for themselves in the streets. In the end, increased health bills exacerbate the infamous economic debt burden. Virgin forests and farmlands are turned into game parks. Citizens are banned from entering their own God-given beaches and game parks unless they pay money for it. Naturally, it is difficult for us in West Africa to disagree with those who feel strongly that Indigenous Peoples are threatened "by mining the lack of wildlife conservation,

⁸ Ibid. p.4

logging, hydro-electric dams, militarisation, forced displacement for the benefit of tourism and other projects. Equally threatened by these developments are languages and traditional way of life of Indigenous Peoples. The colonially drawn up of boundaries in the process of creating modern forms of states has fragmented and interfered with the way of life of Indigenous Peoples. Even sacred sites have not been exempted from desecration. These threats are caused and reinforced by models of development imposed by the rich industrialised nations that seeks to exploit natural resources without regard for present or future generations."⁹

Politics

The political systems being followed in most West African Countries are very much western in form. It requires educated populations and capital for citizens to enjoy its benefits and full potential. All countries in the sub-region are poor and HIPC bound. Majority of the populace is illiterate and living in rural communities.

In Africa, especially, rural indigents have little or no voice in the political games and decision-making and yet political stalwarts are able to camouflage and make them look like they have voice in political matters and in decision-making processes. The majority of the populace lives in rural areas and even there, it is the voice of the representatives of the elite minority that matters. Governance systems and processes are such that a lot of indigenous peoples are bypassed by the system of power and nearly coerced to sanction and support the status quo. The energies of indigents are often tapped during elongated electioneering and when all is over, they are usually abandoned to their fate, the reason being that there are not enough resources to go around to satisfy everybody. So far, it is religious bodies and non-governmental organisations that have kept faith with the poor and indigenous peoples by supporting their cause and giving them hope.

Racism

Racism is evil and must be condemned in all its forms. If racism is evil, then it does not matter if a white fellow, coloured or black practices it, it must certainly be condemned in the strongest terms possible. To a Christian, racism is sin because it seeks to dehumanise others. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female

⁹ "The Karasjok Declaration", final statement of Indigenous Peoples gathering, Sápmi (Saamiland), Karasjok, Norway, 18-22 February, 1998. p. 1.

he created them." So where is the basis of the superiority syndrome of one race over the other being paraded and practised with such impunity in our world? Without justice of a kind that can be recognised and accepted by individuals and communities who have been wounded and humiliated, reconciliation is simply a pious dream. Victims know that their suffering was not accidental. Usually, it has not been simply the result of a moment of social madness or the act of sick mind, but something deliberate and often part of carefully planned and executed [...] policies.¹⁰

Religion

We need to use our spirituality and physical powers to fight injustice to the core and ensure that dominance gives way to rights. Contemporary Africa - torn with much political strife and intrigue, oppressed and exploited by powerful forces, deprived and dishonoured, kept backward by disease and poverty, ignorance and superstition - must be comforted by the prospect of peace, justice and progress which God has promised. And if such is God's plan for the world then, God's people, the Church, more than anyone else, are obliged to work for the realisation of that grand vision.¹¹

The role of the Church and other religious bodies in the fight against racism has persisted long enough and every effort must be made to keep the momentum until racism, the cancer of weak souls, is conquered. Programmes that endorse the fact that the best protectors of human rights are those with the greatest vested interests in their protection i.e. the people themselves, and not of those with interests in their protection, [...] should be promoted.¹² A theological basis for the Churches engagement in the promotion and defence of human rights reads in part:

As Christians, we are called to share in God's mission of justice, peace and respect for all creation, and to seek for all humanity the abundant life which God intends. Within scripture, through tradition, and from the many ways in which the spirit illumines our hearts today, we discern God's gift of dignity for each person and their inherent right to acceptance and participation within the community. [...] {Consultation on "Human Rights and the Churches: New Challenges" Morges, Switzerland June 1998} The spirit of freedom and truth moves us to witness to the justice of the Kingdom of God and to resist injustice in

¹⁰ Jacque Genevieve, 2000. Beyond Impunity. p.34

¹¹ WCC CICARWS Africa Desk 1990. Diakonia, Towards Christian Service of our Time. p.21

¹² SARDC&ACHPR. Protection of the African Refugees and Internally Displaced. p.3

the world. We manifest the life of the Spirit by striving for the release of those who are captive to sin by standing with the oppressed in their struggle for liberation, justice and peace. Liberated by the Spirit, we are empowered to understand the world from the perspective and the sharing of resources. {WCC Seventh Assembly, Canberra, 1991}

At the UN World Conference on Racism to be held in September 2001 in Durban, South Africa, it is our hope that this stance of the Churches would be publicised and defended.

Globalisation

The process of globalisation has once again re-emphasised civil and political rights, dividing Indigenous Peoples and the world's poor from economic, social and cultural rights. We affirm the position taken by the WCC Fifth Assembly that human rights are indivisible. No rights are possible without the basic guarantees for life including the right to work, to participate in decision-making, to adequate food, to health care, to decent housing, to education for the full development of the human potential and to a safe environment and the conservation of the earth's resources.¹³

Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa takes this opportunity to add its voice to urge Churches and Councils to support the cause of Indigenous Peoples, especially their right to self-determination to assure the promotion of their political and economic future, culture, land rights, spirituality, language, tradition and forms of organisation and to the protection of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge including property rights.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to highlight some of the root causes of destruction of the environment and its relationship with racism. I defined some concepts and proceeded to explain the nature and form of environmental destruction and how this is promoted and exacerbated by racism. The Earth is for God. Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right? But even if you do suffer, for righteousness sake, you will be blessed [...]¹⁴

¹³ Official Report of the Eight Assembly of WCC. Together on the Way. p.198-199

¹⁴ The Devotional Study Bible I Peter 3: 13-15

Land and its Relationship to the People's Spirituality

Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Asante

The concern of this paper is to bring out the spiritual relation of the people and the land, from the biblical understanding as well as the general longing for the spiritual relationship with the land understood as Mother Earth.

The Old Testament

The People and the Land from the Biblical Perspective

The Land is the Lord's land. One of the very significant Psalms of the Bible attributed to David, the greatest of the Kings of Israel, is Psalm 24. The first verse of the Psalm reads: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein." The earth and its fullness and the people who dwell on the earth belong to the Lord by virtue of the fact that both the earth and its people owe their being in the sense existence, to Yahweh's creative fiat. Yahweh founded (the earth) upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers. (Psalm 24:2).

In Leviticus 25:23-24 we read, "the land shall not be sold in perpetuity for the land is mine: for you are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the country you possess, you shall grant a redemption of the land." Commenting on this statement, the Interpreter's Bible said, "The freehold of the land of Canaan belongs to the Lord. The land is generally said to be "the inheritance" of Israel, but since the land is theirs only by the will and favor of the Lord, not by right, they are strangers and sojourners there even as they had been in Egypt.

The point is the Old Testament is very emphatic when it comes to the question of ownership of the land. The land is Yahweh's land simpliciter. (See Jer. 2:7; Ezek. 38:16; Joel 3:2; Dt. 11:11-12 etc). Because Yahweh is the creator of the land, he has absolute right over it. He also disposes of its goods (Gen. 2:16), establishes its laws (Ezek 23:10), and causes it to bear fruit (Ps. 65, 104). He is Lord. The earth is his footstool (Is. 66:1; Acts 7:49).

The Land can be defiled

The Old Testament is full of warnings against the misuse and overexploitation of the land. Wherever the people disobeyed Yahweh and defiled the land, they

incurring Yahweh's displeasure (Jer. 2:7; 3:2). A well known concept of the Old Testament is that all kinds of sins against the laws of the covenant are attacks against the sacred character of the land itself, which is certainly a symbol of the nation that inhabits it. Thus, for example in Numbers 35:33-34 we read, "Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed except by the blood of the one who shed it. Do not defile the land where you live and where I dwell, for I, the Lord, dwell among the Israelites."

There the theological seriousness of bloodshed is articulated against the background of the central theme of Numbers, namely, the need to maintain the purity of the land because the Holy God dwells there in the midst of his people. The theological implication of this central theme of the book of Numbers is that the land is holy not only in the sense that it belongs to God but also in the sense that the "People of God," dwell on it and the holy God lives there, among his people. (See also Dt. 21: 22-23; 24:4; Jer. 16:18 etc). All of this is to say that the Old Testament perceives the land as belonging to the Lord, as holy and sacred because the 'People of God', among whom God dwells, lives on it, and as a symbol of the people of Israel. Any infringement against the covenant stipulations becomes an affront to the sacred character of the land. It also means that the sacred character of the land is maintained through obedience and commitment to the covenant stipulations. Righteousness, in that sense, maintains the purity of the land.



Participants from the workshop go for a field trip to see the environmental destruction caused by sand harvesting in Ghana.

The Land as Israel's Inheritance

Another significant theological interpretation of the land in the Old Testament is the view of the land as the nation's 'patrimony' or 'inheritance'. "Understand then that it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people." (Deut. 9:6).

"When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you." (Deut. 10:8).

In these and many other passages of Deuteronomy, the giftedness of the land is emphasized. Any time Israel enjoys the fruit of the land, she should give praise to the Lord who owns it and out of gratuitousness has given it to her as an inheritance.

Israel can lose the land through disobedience to the covenant stipulations and its loss would be synonymous with the destruction of the nation. "If you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the Lord your God and provoking him to anger, ... you will quickly perish from the land..." (Deut. 4:25-26). All of this is to say that from the perspective of Old Testament Theology, "the land also served for Israel as a visible symbol of its special relationship to God. The people were never to forget the God who gave them (the) land."¹⁵ To live long of the land God had given them and to enjoy its fruits was nothing short of reward of an obedient and responsive life (Deut. 5:16).¹⁶

The Land as Expression of Israel's Election

Consequently, the loss of the land was synonymous with the forfeiture "of all that God's election of Israel had enough to the people."¹⁷ The land, in that sense "was not only a gift of God's election, but to some extent it was also expression and confirmation of [Israel's election]"¹⁸ In other words, the land was very central to the very being of Israel. After all, Israel's redemption consisted of liberation from the bondage of "landlessness" to the freedom of "landedness."

The Land as Symbol of Hope

"He who possesses the land also possesses God." When the People of Israel went into exile, they suffered the loss of the land. This gave rise to an intense expectation that they would one day return to their inheritance. The land became,

¹⁵ E. Clement, Old Testament Theology: A Fresh Approach: Atlanta: John Knox, 1979, p.93.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.94

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

for the exiled Israelites, "a sign of hope and an object of promise." The people's spiritual and eschatological longing was that one day, they would be able to go back to the land they had lost, purge it from all defilement and rebuild on it a new community which would truly be the chosen elect of Yahweh. In the words of Clement, "it became impossible to think of a restored Israel, and a cleansed and purified community, except in relation to this land. Even more than the hope of a messiah, it appeared as an indispensable part of the life that was anticipated as the fulfillment of Yahweh's choosing of Israel."¹⁹

The centrality of the land in Israel's spiritual and eschatological longings never faded even in later period of the Old Testament literature. Within the later period of the Old Testament literature, we find Israel's faith emerging with keen expectation of the land as necessary to the fullness of Israel's redemption. (Isa. 60; 17-25). In this perspective, the possession of the land takes on eschatological meaning. From the perspective of the Bible, the human life depends completely on the riches the earth conceals and on the fertility of the soil. In the words of Gilles Becquet, the Earth "is the providential framework of [human] life."²⁰ There is also an intimate bond between the human and the earth. The human came forth from the earth adamah (Gen. 2:7; 3:19cf Is. 64:7; Jer. 18:6). The human got his name adam from adamah, the earth.

The earth, according to Becquet, "is associated with [the human] in the whole history of salvation, from the beginning of time to the expectation of the Kingdom to come."²¹

The New Testament

Jesus and the Earth

Jesus is presented in the New Testament as sharing in God's Lordship over the earth. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things hold together." (Col. 1:15-17)

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Gilles Decquet, "Earth" in Xavier Leon-Dufour ed; Dictionary of Biblical Theology 2nd ed. New York: Seabury. 1973, p.129.

²¹ Ibid.

From this perspective, we can say that Jesus shares with the Father God in the possession and ownership of the earth and the fullness thereof. Jesus said, "all power in heaven and earth has been given to me." (Mt. 28:18) In his work: The Uniqueness of Israel, Lance Lambert observed as follows:

Supremely, the land of Israel is the land of Jesus. Wherever we tread in this country, we tread where Jesus trod. It was in Bethlehem that he was born, and in Nazareth he was brought up. There he spent the first thirty years of his life, becoming a carpenter by trade. ... as far as we know, he never left this land. From the way he spoke about it and its natural life, we understand how he loved the land it was, simply, his land."²²

There is no doubt that Jesus came with a message of universal redemption. Such a message was hardly limited to a particular group of people. Nevertheless in proclaiming this universal message, Jesus employed the language of a particular land and civilization. In John 1: 14, we read that Jesus who is God became flesh and dwelt among us. By his incarnation, Jesus affirmed the value of the earthly (I shall come back to this). In the New Testament, the earth is linked with the history of the redeemed of the Lord. It awaits "the revelation of the sons of God.... with the hope of being itself delivered from the slavery of corruption in order to enter into the liberty and the glory of the children of God." (Rom. 8: 19-21)

Associated with the human from the very beginning of existence, the earth remains so unto the end like the 'redeemed of the Lord'. The earth is "an object of redemption, although in a mysterious way". In its present state it is doomed to "pass away" (Mt. 24:25). This passing away, however, is not intended to spell the end of the earth for on its ashes will rise the "New Earth" (Rev. 21:1) which is the hope of our redemption and in which corruption is swallowed by incorruption and injustice overtaken by justice.

Incarnation

We have observed that Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us. Richard A. Young observes that, "the New Testament doctrine of the incarnation continues the Old Testament theme of God's acting within the created realm".²³ According to Young, "the incarnation is the supreme statement that the physical realm is not inherently evil but rather is of utmost value. If God assumed a physical body

²² Lance Lambert, The Uniqueness of Israel, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1995, p.42

²³ Richard A. Young, Healing The Earth: A Theocentric Perspective on Environmental Problems and Their Solutions. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994, p 113.

and willingly suffered for the healing of creation, then God must be intimately concerned with the physical and value it highly." ²⁴

Theocentric Perspective

All we have said suggest that the biblical perspective on creation, in the sense of "the earth and its fullness thereof", is theocentric. In the words of Young, "theocentrism teaches that God is the center of the universe and that He also is the source and upholder of meaning, purpose, value and ethics, as well as the unifying principle of the cosmos. Everything finds existence, value, purpose, and meaning in the infinite and transcendent God". ²⁵

The ecological implications of theocentrism so understood are numerous. First, theocentrism views humanity as an integral part of the "community of creation." This "preserves the uniqueness of humanity within creation without yielding to anthropocentric arrogance." ²⁶ Humans have been gifted and commissioned by God to serve him in the "community of creation" as humble stewards or caretakers.

Flowing from this is that theocentrism, in the sense of the theocentric perception of creation alone, is the basis for true stewardship of creation. A steward is one who has been delegated the responsibility to manage the state of affairs of another. We can hardly talk about the stewardship of the earth without the corresponding belief in a God who is the creator and owner of all things. Without positing a transcendent God who defines creation as creator and owner, stewardship of the earth will degenerate into management of the earth for one's own benefit. ²⁷

Connected with the concept of the stewardship of earth which flows from a theocentric perception of the earth is responsibility "to work" with God to help the creation community to function as God intended". ²⁸

Theocentrism provides a theological rationale for the existence of the environment. "The divine reason for creation provides rights to all God's creatures to live the life that God intended for them." ²⁹

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 128

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 129

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 130

God created the earth to be the home of all living creatures. We should maintain the earth to be what it is intended to be. To destroy the earth, to make it uninhabitable, is to fight against God's intention for the earth and ultimately to disrespect God Himself.

The basic premise of the theology of stewardship as we have already noted, is the theocentric conception of the earth. Psalm 24:1 states clearly that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

We shall now consider the general longing for the spiritual relationship with the land understood as "Mother Earth" from the African perspective.

The African Concept of Pan-Vitalism

Pan-vitalism, "the belief that everything in the universe has life"³⁰, provides the context for the African's perception of the earth.

In his article, "The African World-View and Theory of Knowledge," K. C. Anyanwu stated:

What the West calls an inert or lifeless material world is alive in African cultural assumption. One may hear the African saying that there are spirits in the trees, forests, rivers etc. In saying that material things are alive, the African is consistent with his basic assumption about nature. He means that life-force permeates the whole universe and that matter and spirit are inseparable realities. Behind the natural things and intimately coexisting with them is the non-material power. This life-force, according to him, has existed from the beginning of the world. This force is active. Man, animals and plants share from this life-force and it can be communicated to things... Everything the African thinks about and feels has to be in the image of a living force interacting with other living forces.

Because everything is a vital force or shares in this force, the African feels and thinks that all things are similar, share the same qualities and nature. It does not mean that the African does not know the distinction between a tree and a goat, a bird and a man. Rather, the ontological relationships among life-forces do not permit him to see things in isolation.³¹

³⁰ Emmanuel Asante, "Ecology Untapped Resource of Pan-Vitalism in Africa" in The African Ecclesial Review, 27, 5 (1985), 289.

³¹ Asante, Toward An African Christian Theology, p. 129.

³¹ Ibid.

³¹ K. C. Anyanwu "The African World-View and Theory of Knowledge," in E. A. Ruch and K.C. Anyanwu African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa. (Rome: Catholic Books Agency, Officium tibri Catholic, 1981. pp 89 - 90.

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This long statement adequately explains the African concept of pan-vitalism which suggests that nothing in the universe is inanimate. "The Creator who created all things in the universe is also the Animator who animates that which he created."³² K. A. Busia expressed this well:

Their [i.e. African's] cosmologies were based on the existence of a Supreme Being who was Spirit and Creator, and the source of all power and energy. He granted existence to all created things. He animated the gods, the spirits and human beings, animals, rivers, trees, rocks and all matter. Their metaphysics conceived the Creator as the Universal Vital Force that animated and energized all created things whose real essence consisted not in matter but in the energy and power infused into them by the Creator.³³

The African pan-vitalist conception of nature disposes him or her to the belief that there is an ontological relationship among all things. The African "does not see himself in isolation from the other creatures, nor does he see other creatures in isolation from himself. As has been observed by K. A. Dickson, the African "is in concert with nature; not only is he subject to nature's fierce wrath, but also he is sustained by nature's bounty and shares kinship with things that make up nature."³⁴

As we have noted that for Africans in general, nature has spirit, and this pan-vitalist conception of nature determines the African's attitude to nature. The Akan wood carver, for instance, "takes time to propitiate certain trees before cutting them by offering sacrifices of *akoko*, fowl or *kosua*, egg and praying I am about to cut you, do not let the axe cut me, do not let me suffer ill."³⁵

"The Akan traditional drummer begins his drumming by addressing the spirits of the materials used in the making of his *ntumpane*, or "talking drums".³⁶

³² Asante, "Ecology," p. 290

³³ K. A. Busia, Purposeful Education in Africa 3rd ed. Mouton: The Hague, 1969 p. 14.

³⁴ K. A. Dickson, Theology in Africa, London: Longmann and Todd, 1984, p. 161.

³⁵ Emmanuel Asante, Toward an African Christian Theology of the Kingdom of God: The Kingship of Onyame, Lewiston: Mellen University Press, 1995, p. 128.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁶ K. A. Busia, "The Ashanti," in African World: Studies in the Cosmological and Social Values of African Peoples, Edited by Daryll Forde: London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1954, p. 194.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁶ Asante, Toward An African Christian Theology, p. 129.

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³⁶ Ibid.

³⁶ Asante, Toward An African Christian Theology, p. 129.

³⁶ Ibid.

Busia recorded the following saying of a drummer: Spirit of the Cedar tree,

The Creator's drummer announces

That he has made himself to arise

We are addressing you and you will understand.³⁷

Because the tense membrane of the *Ntumpane* as talking drums are made of Elephant's ear, the drummer also addresses the spirit of the elephant saying:

Spirit of Elephant,

The Creator's drummer announces

That he has started from his sleep

He has roused himself at early dawn.³⁸

The Earth (Asaase) is revered because, "it is believed that her spirit makes plants grow; she has the power of fertility; living or dying, the human depends upon Mother Earth. The general African conception of nature is that "God, who is nature's Creator-Animator and himself essentially Spirit, has placed his spirit within each creature in varying degrees. At the heart of every creature then, is a divine element.³⁹ Because nature has life and a divine element in it, nature is sacred and therefore, should be treated with care and respect.⁴⁰

Conclusion

It will suffice to conclude this paper by saying that "the laws governing the use of the land in the Old Testament were intended to stress the authority of God, to whom the soil belongs by right. The human has the use but not the ownership of the land. The human's claim to the land, the cultivation and harvesting of the land and its produce is subject to God's absolute ownership of the land.

The New Testament points to the Lordship of the Triune God over the land. Jesus shares with God in the possession and ownership of the earth and its fullness thereon.

All of this means that the human does not own the earth. The human has a responsible stewardship over the earth. The human is accountable to the owner and Lord of earth, God, for his/her use of the earth.

³⁷ K. A. Busia, "The Ashanti," in *African World: Studies in the Cosmological and Social Values of African Peoples*, Edited by Daryll Forde: London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1954, p. 194.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

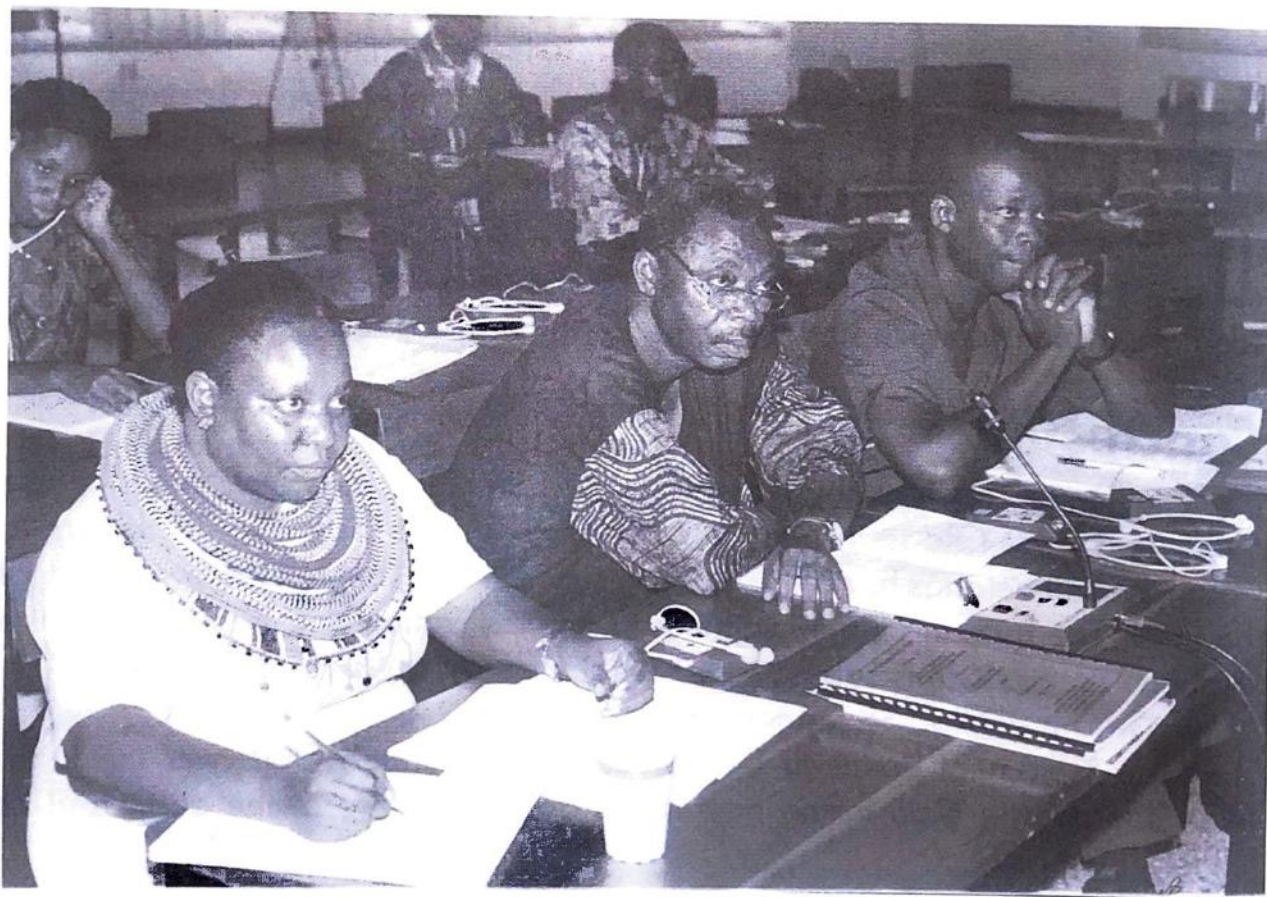
³⁹ Asante, *Toward An African Christian Theology*, p. 129.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

The traditional African conception of the earth is that it is sacred, not because it is a god but because it owes its being, its animation, its sacred quality to God, the Creator-Animator who creates and animates whatever he has created. The human depends upon the earth for substance while living. When the human dies, it is the earth that receives him. The Earth then is a sacred mother. It must be revered and cared for.

In African thought, the Earth is not an "it". It is personal. The Earth is "Yaa" or "Afia", that is a female born on Thursday, if you are an Akan and a female born on Friday, if you are a Ga.

The Earth is sacred, it is our kith kin and it must be so treated.



Participants listen keenly to the proceedings of the workshop.

Review of the National, Regional and International Standards

Lucy Mullenkei

The indigenous peoples in the new millennium woke up with a focus to advance their recognition. In Africa though we have tried, we have not advanced, in that there is still the question of *who is indigenous and who is not*.

Despite that the participation of indigenous peoples of Africa has increased in the international scene, there is still a gap as we are not working together to achieve our common goal. What is happening is a situation where competition is taking its roots and nothing to be accounted for.

There has been a better collaboration than before with other indigenous brothers from Asia, the Americans, the Pacific and the Arctic. Joint discussion and participation in different issues affecting the indigenous people have taken place and should be very much encouraged.

The millennium opened with approval of the *Permanent Forum* on indigenous issues by ECOSOC. The permanent forum though approved still has a hard road ahead. The indigenous peoples have to select representatives to represent them.. This is very tough for it means every region has to have one representative: - 8 regions of the world. Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Pacific, The Arctic, North America and one seat was to alternate between regions the Indigenous Peoples have to agree on. In all these regions for indigenous peoples, it has not been easy nor will it be easy to select a representative. The reason is that most of those indigenous peoples who have been participating frequently feel that they should take the lead. The other problems are that there have not been clear guidelines on how to select the representative. The other regions like the Americans have been having frequent meetings and progress can be seen ahead. In Asia, there has been a consultation and they have made progress just like the Americans who held their own consultations on the permanent forum and contributed a lot in the progress of the whole process. In Africa, we have not had those consultations. A few of us followed the process keenly and thought we could have something positive coming out soon. It has been disappointing in that, as the progress advances, a few indigenous peoples organizations want

to be seen taking the lead without a democratic - participation by all. It comes back to the question of who is more indigenous than the other? There is great fear that as the governments see our confusion they will take advantage and impose a candidate of their choice. Therefore, we do not know which government will represent us in Africa. It would be good if we have a government that has already recognized Indigenous peoples. The major problem for us Indigenous peoples in Africa is that those who are supposed to be advising us on the issue are taking sides and thus difficult for the organizations to compromise. I hope in this meeting we can come up with some recommendations that can help advance the process.

- There has been other activities however, we have had consultations on Indigenous peoples experiences with electoral and political party systems where Africa participated and was able to share with others.
- Indigenous peoples from the world made more progress by meeting and consulting on the issue of conflicts in their territories. In Manila the Philippines in December 2000, over 50 different organizations and those of Africa included met to discuss conflict resolution, peace-building and sustainable development.
- In the beginning of the year 2001 we saw the office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights and the UN meeting group on minorities organized a second workshop on multiculturalism in Africa, this was held in Mali – in a place kind of the Turag's Indigenous Peoples territories. These are just but a few happenings.
- The international scene has remained busy meeting and consultations have been going on. Meetings on environment have taken the lead. It is sad to say that there has not been a very strong representation of the African Indigenous Peoples. Take for example the climate change conference of parties in the Hague last November/December, from Africa Indigenous peoples we were only three, before that there was a meeting on the same in Lyon France and there was only one from Africa. This is a tough area since the documents do not have anywhere mentioning Indigenous peoples at all. It is not like the CBD, where IPS lobbied and worked for years and have a good part of it – Article 8j of the convention on Biodiversity tells it all. CBD has seen a great participation by Indigenous Peoples of Africa for the past 10 years. I am not sure yet what is happening on desertification. This is an area where Africa should really take lead. Let's start it from the country level, especially those that are faced with the problem.

If we do not try to participate we shall always be left out. I would like to recommend that we come-up with a means on how we can share information and come – up with a list on who is doing what and who has going where. Let us share what we can.

You and me know that for the environment the Indigenous Peoples are custodians, they know what it means to them, therefore for us who are able to know what is happening and what can affect us lets reach out to our communities.

If we were well organized in Africa, we could be now seating and setting our agenda as peoples for Rio plus 10. We would be able to say no to toxic waste dumping by the Americans when they want to trade with carbon emissions – well known as carbon Zincs. In many countries of Africa where IPS live, a lot of environmental destructions is going on displacing them.

On Racisms – we have not done much as Indigenous Peoples. Consultants in Africa were have taken place in Botswana and Dakar. I have not seen a great progress from us Indigenous peoples. In Botswana we had AIWO represented by a Sudanese member, she expressed the difficult time they had as Indigenous Peoples, they were not even allowed to give any statements, all what she did was to distribute her speech and they managed to meet with a few Indigenous peoples and other NGOs. In Dakar there was no good participation but the few who were there through the Minority Rights Group.



Emerging Alternative Strategies for Caring for the Earth

Joshua Awuku-Apaw

Earlier presenters at this forum have dwelt quite deeply on the issue of mankind's relationship with the earth, both physically and spiritually. For some of us who are committed somehow immensely towards environmental and ecological rebirth, anytime we see religion making a contribution towards environmental reconstruction, we feel that the creation narratives as contained in the Book of Genesis is being continued, this time not by the Good Lord Himself directly but through His agents. Of even greater importance about this workshop is the focus being put on the plight of the poor, the marginalised and indigenous peoples who, through no fault of theirs, have been thrown to the fringes of society and are being made to face the blunt of poverty, deprivation and discrimination.

The Book of Genesis of the Holy Bible tells us that at the Creation, God created the heavens and the earth. He filled the earth with water bodies, trees and vegetation of all types and put these in the dominion of man who He created later. The earth therefore was composed of forests, deserts, mountains, grasslands, water bodies: rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, lagoons, wetlands, the sea, etc. All these were put in place for man to utilize for his well being, growth and development.

Forests, wooded grasslands and shrublands cover some 53 million square kilometers or some 40% of the Earth's land surface. The term "forests" here is being used to describe forest ecosystems which include trees, soils, waters and the multitude of associated animals, micro organisms and plants. In addition to these, we have deeply buried in the bowls of the earth and sometimes on the surface rich mineral resources of various types. Among these are gold, diamond, bauxite, manganese, tin as well as oil and natural gases. These resources have been utilized consistently over the years for man's needs, despite the fact that some are renewable and others non-renewable.

In this presentation I shall touch on the gamble that man has subjected the earth to. I will then look at how to live sustainably and present Ghana, my country, as a victim. These will serve as a backdrop for the discussion on AGENDA

21. It will be followed by emerging strategies for caring for the earth and then manage a somber conclusion.

Gambling with survival

Our civilizations are at risk because we are misusing natural resources and disturbing natural systems. We are pressing the Earth to the limits of its capacity. Since the industrial revolution, human numbers have grown eight-fold. Industrial production has risen by more than 100 times in the past 100 years. This unprecedented increase in human numbers and activity has had major impacts on the environment.

The capacity of the Earth to support human and other life has been significantly diminished. In less than 200 years, the planet has lost six million square kilometers of forest; the sediment load from soil erosion has risen three-fold in major river basins and by, eight times in smaller, more intensively-used ones; withdrawals have grown from 100 to 3600 cubic kilometers a year.

Atmospheric systems have been disturbed, threatening the climate regime to which we and other forms of life have long been adapted. Since the mid-eighteenth century, human activities have more than doubled the methane in the atmosphere; increased the concentration of carbon dioxide by 27%; and significantly damaged the stratospheric ozone layer.

Pollution of air, soil, fresh waters and the oceans has become a serious and continuing threat to the health of humans and other species. Humanity is causing emissions of arsenic, mercury, nickel and vanadium that are now double those from natural sources, zinc emissions are triple and those from cadmium and lead are respectively, five and eighteen times higher than rates.

Most astonishing of all, the 6 billion plus people now on Earth are already using 40% of our most elemental resource - the energy from the sun harnessed by green plants and land.

Yet despite this vast takeover of nature, hundreds of millions of people struggle in poverty, lacking a tolerable quality of life. One person in five cannot get enough food properly to support an active working life. One quarter of the world's people are without safe drinking water. Every year millions of children die from malnutrition and preventable diseases. Such conditions are grossly unjust. They also threaten the peace and stability of many countries now and of the whole world eventually.

The resources of the Earth are overtaxed now but without calamitous loss of life, global human population cannot stabilize at less than 10 billion. It may reach 12 billion. How can this vast increase in human numbers be supported without doing irreversible damage to the Earth. Clearly not by going on living as we are now. Clearly not by a policy of business as usual.

Living sustainably

The change to living sustainably and *Caring for the Earth* will be a major one for most people.

For a start, we will need to understand and accept the consequences of being part of the great community of life and to become more conscious of the effects of our decisions of other societies, future generations and other species. We will need to perfect and promote an ethic for living sustainably.

Living sustainably must be a guiding principle for all the world's people but it never will be while hundreds of millions live without enough of even the basic essentials of life. To make it possible for us all to think of the welfare of later generations and other species, we need a new kind of development that rapidly improves the quality of life for the disadvantaged.

The Earth has its limits; with the best technology imaginable, they are not infinitely expandable. To live within those limits and see that those who now have least can soon get more, two things will need to be done; population growth must stop everywhere, and the rich must stabilize, and in some cases, reduce, their demand for resources. Ways exist to do this without reducing the real quality of life.

Sustainable living must be the new pattern for all levels; individuals, communities, nations and the world. To adopt the new pattern will require a significant change in the attitudes and practices of many people. We will need to ensure that education programmes reflect the importance of an ethic for living sustainably and that information campaigns are mounted to disseminate it.

Local communities are the focus for much that needs to be done in making the change to living sustainably but there is little they can do if they lack the power to act. Subject to the overriding interests of the larger community, they must be enabled to manage the resources on which they depend and to have an effective voice in decisions that affect them.

Progress towards sustainability has been slow because of the belief that conservation and development are opposite. Legal, social, economic and technical measures aimed at sustainability must be integrated in planning and action at all levels, particularly in national governments which have the main levers for strategic action.

Much of what needs to be done if we are to properly care for the earth is of global significance and requires a global response. The framework exists for the cooperation, monitoring and management that are necessary, but programmes are poorly coordinated and rarely integrated. Funding is far from equal to the task. A new alliance of all the countries of the world is needed aimed towards reforms and improving the quality of life in the less developed areas of the world.

Ghana: a Victim

Very horrendous and alarming figures exist to testify to the fact that the earth is losing its carrying capacity at a fast rate. For instance in Ghana, in 1900, Ghana had a forest cover of 10 million hectares. Within a period of 100 years, in 2000, almost everything had disappeared with forest cover down to only about 800,000 hectares. Again, the population of Ghana in 1970 was around 8 million. At the last census in 1999 this figure shot up to more than 18 million. Yet the resources being consumed by the 11 million increase in population was the same resources consumed by the 8 million. The population increase calls for more farmlands, more places for settlements, more roads, more amenities and indeed, more infrastructure. At the same time, intensive exploration and exploitation is needed to earn foreign exchange to keep the economy on wheels. Big dams have to be constructed to supply cheap electricity for infant industries and also for domestic use. The lakes created in the dams consume forests, animals and settlements, putting extreme stress on the space for habitations and other purposes.

In an attempt to tackle this global problems, the U.N. convened a conference in the Brazilian capital of Rio de Janeiro to deliberate on the issue of depleting environmental resources and development. Dubbed the Rio Summit, UNCED sought to produce a programme of action to juxtapose environment and development. Five principal documents emerged from the conference. They were all programmes geared towards the revamp of the resources of the life support systems: the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere and biosphere.

The first three are:

- The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Its 27 principles define the rights and responsibilities of nations as they pursue human development and well-being.
- Agenda 21, a blueprint on how to make development socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.
- A statement of principles to guide the management, conservation and sustainable development and the maintenance of all forms of life

Two major international Conventions were negotiated separately from but in parallel with preparations for the Earth Summit and were signed by most governments meeting at Rio

- The aim of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is to stabilize greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at levels that will not dangerously upset the global climate system. This will require a reduction in our emissions of such gases as carbon dioxide, a by-product of the use of burning fuels for energy.
- The Convention on Biological Diversity requires that countries adopt ways and means to conserve the variety of living species, and ensure that the benefits from using biological diversity are equitably shared.

Agenda 21 explains that population, consumption and technology are the primary driving forces of environmental change. It lays out what needs to be done to reduce wasteful and inefficient consumption patterns in some parts of the world, while encouraging increased but sustainable development in others. It offers policies and programmes to achieve a sustainable balance between consumption, population and the Earth's life-supporting capacity. It describes some of the technologies and techniques that need to be developed to provide for human needs while carefully managing natural resources.

Agenda 21 provides options for combating degradation of the land, air and water, conserving forests and the diversity of species of life. It deals with poverty and excessive consumption, health and education, cities and farmers. There are roles for everyone - governments, business people, trade unions, scientists, teachers, indigenous peoples, women, youth and children.

Traditional Modes of Caring for Earth

Agenda 21, the blueprint for good environmental behaviour identified roles for indigenous and local people in the battle to conserve and protect the earth and its resources. It says that "indigenous peoples, who represent a significant part of the world's population depend on renewable resources and ecosystem to maintain their well-being. Over many generations, they have evolved a holistic, traditional, and scientific knowledge of their land, natural resources and environment"

The Green Earth Organization, realizing the importance of indigenous and traditional knowledge has initiated moves to influence government and policy makers to revise and tap these skills. They are mostly related to programmes which link conservation with the lives of the peoples and even the unborn.

Emerging Strategies

Before then, let's contextualise the strategies within a three point framework. The first is simple and obvious. It is that we, the world's people, want to survive, but more than that, we want a satisfactory life for all of us and for our descendants. To achieve that goal we need a new kind of development, and we must learn to live differently.

The second is that we depend on the resources of the Earth to meet our basic and vital needs. If they are diminished or deteriorate, we risk that our needs and those of our descendants will go unmet. Because we have been failing to care for the Earth properly and living unsustainably, that risk has become dangerously high. We are now gambling with the survival of civilization.

The third point is that we need not lose. We can eliminate the risk by ensuring that the benefits of development are distributed equitably, and by learning to care for the Earth and live sustainably.

Pollution Prevention and Control

The best way to deal with pollution is to prevent it from occurring in the first place. Where this is not possible, effective control measure must be employed protecting the environment. Pollution prevention is not only the best approach from the environmental viewpoint – it makes very sound economic sense, since it is really cheaper and easier to prevent pollution than to control it and report the environmental damage caused. The promotion of cleaner production

practices and technologies and the application of sustainable practices that prevent pollution of water and land in industrial, agriculture mining and forestry will be adopted. However for pollution prevention and control, an effective legislative base is essential.

Economic/Market Instrument

Government and environmental regulators around the world are increasingly seeking to apply instruments which harness economic or market forces to help achieve environmental conservation goals. While regulatory mechanism are always going to be needed to protect society from the irresponsible environmental actions of a minority, there is scope to apply economic or market forces to promote environmental quality.

Ecosystem Management

A sound understanding of ecosystem characteristics and dynamics should form the basis for conserving the environment. The availability of scientific information on the geographic distribution characteristics and behaviour of ecosystems is therefore essential if sustainable management strategies are to be developed and successfully managed. Consequently it is necessary to encourage economic development based on sustainable ecosystem.

Environmental Justice

Much of the damage caused to the environment is the result of individuals seeking to externalize their costs into the environment (for example, by dumping wastes into a river or stream) without consideration of the impact their action may have on the health and welfare of others who depend on the environment. To conserve the environment therefore, it is necessary to apply the law consistently and in a firmly transparent and accountable manner.

Environmental Education

Informed awareness is a prerequisite to changing individual behaviour towards the environment and education is the essential means of developing informed awareness. Consequently as a way forward the agency will intensify its effort in ensuring that all sections of the population understand environmental system and processes for the protection, improvement and enhancement of Ghana's environment for present and future generations. It is necessary to continue to assist institutions responsible for education to assume responsibility for the delivery of environmental education as their legitimate aspect of their activities.

Compliance and Enforcement

Compliance with active enforcement of environmental laws and regulations are essential if national conservation goals are to be achieved. Every member of society needs to be made accountable for protection and enhancing the environment. The formation of compliance and enforcement networks will enhance environmental conservation. High priority must be given to enforcement action to ensure compliance with environmental permit conditions and to responding to public complaints.

These activities are vital to deterring environmental crisis and to minimize the likelihood that individuals can profit from illegal activity and to reducing deformation of the environmental and consequent impact of people's freedom of choice. We must be self policing regarding the environment and teach our children so.

With regards to criminal law to regulate human behaviour, the Green Earth Organization in Ghana is for instance advocating criminal legislation that will move as a counterpart of the environmental law and the policies covering the management of natural resources i.e. forest and wildlife policy and minerals policy. This is because even though the policies contain clauses of responsibility to the communities where extraction takes place, these responsibilities are grossly abused by the extracting concerns. The abuses when hammered into the criminal code and made actionable in court, will encourage environment activists to take on the people or companies who abuse the environment. A couple of court actions and the consequent damage will serve as a deterrent.

Science and Data

Effective environmental conservation depends on high quality science to generate comprehensive, relevant and reliable data concerning all aspects of the environment and natural resources

Conclusion

We are falling from God's Grace and should this be? God has, by his grace given us the opportunity to redefine our ways, care for and save our common future. The emerging strategies that I have expounded do not necessarily exhaust the list, albeit I hope I have served to provide or generate some food for thought and perhaps through that, other alternatives might emerge.

Abokobi Declaration

We,

Indigenous Peoples representing different faiths, civil rights groups and environmental organizations from Burkina Faso (Touareg), Bolivia (Aymara), Cameroon (Mbororo), Ghana (Fante, Kwahu, Builsa, Guan), Kenya (Maasai, Ogiek), Mali (Touareg), Niger (Touareg), Nigeria (Ogoni, Edo), Philippines (Kankana-ey), Sierra Leone (Sherbro, Mende, Temne), Togo (Be);

Gathered here at Abokobi, Ghana from the 7th to the 10th of April 2001, at a workshop on "LAND, ENVIRONMENT AND RACISM" facilitated by the World Council of Churches-Indigenous Peoples Program, in conjunction with the Christian Council of Ghana and the Indigenous Information Network Kenya;

Aware of our common histories of dispossession, relocation from our ancestral lands, being marginalized, discriminated against and faced with the threat of extinction;

Recognizing the need for a concerted effort against threats to our survival;

Disturbed by the continuous conflicts and wars in the region which create internal and external refugee crises and degradation of the environment;

Concerned that racism is still prevalent and perpetuated in the exploitation of land through discriminatory practices such as dumping of contaminated wastes, use and management of land in indigenous communities;

Believing that Land is the essence of our very existence as a people (our identity, our hope and our primary source of life);

United in the common struggle for Indigenous Peoples' right to land and self-determination;

Affirming our commitment to our struggle;

Alarmed that Indigenous Peoples Lands are exposed to common threats through national policies on globalization, dispossession, relocation and urbanization etc.; Indigenous Peoples' lack of knowledge and poverty; wars and population growth;

Hereby declare:

1. That Indigenous Peoples traditional beliefs and other faiths recognize that Land belongs to God.
2. That in traditional beliefs of Indigenous Peoples and other faiths, Land has a spiritual significance which is expressed in the belief that Land represents their:
 - Identity
 - Hope and future
 - Source of faith and
 - Primary source of life.
3. That the present generation holds Land in trust for the past, present and future generations.
4. That because man is a trustee, it is important to conserve and use land sustainably.
5. That the defilement of Land attracts the wrath of God and the ancestors.
6. That the situation whereby states and multinational companies take over Indigenous Peoples' land without their prior and informed consent and without compensation, amounts to racism and is inhuman.

Hereby call upon,

(i) Religious Bodies:

1. To endeavor to study and appreciate the ecological implications of traditional beliefs and practices related to land.
2. To initiate a continuous dialogue with indigenous communities on sustainable land use and management.
3. To play an advocacy role for Indigenous Peoples and the environment.
4. To eliminate all forms of racism and discrimination within themselves whilst protecting Indigenous Peoples from the same.

(ii) Indigenous Peoples:

1. To change their traditional practices that are harmful to their natural habitat.
2. To promote justice, address disadvantages, work together for reconciliation and respect our rights to determine our destiny.

(iii) Governments:

1. To recognize and uphold the rights of Indigenous Peoples to Land and their environment.
2. To take into consideration the existence of Indigenous Peoples while making national laws and policies concerning forest exploitation, mining, etc.
3. To involve Indigenous Peoples in all decision-making processes that affect their lives, livelihood and access to land and other resources.
4. To respect and faithfully implement the peace accords and resume stalled peace talks and overcome setbacks in some ongoing peace negotiations;

(iv) Non-government organizations;

To promote affirmative action for Indigenous Peoples and carry out advocacy and capacity building activities on the areas of human rights, struggle against racism and poverty alleviation.

(v) African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights:

To initiate a continuous dialogue with Indigenous Peoples in their respective territories in order to eliminate human rights abuses, marginalization and discrimination.

(vi) UN System:

To influence national governments and regional groupings in recognizing Indigenous Peoples' right to land and self-determination as captured in UN Resolution 45/164, 1990 "Indigenous Peoples - A New Partnership".

Dated this 10th day of April, 2001 at Abokobi, Ghana.



Nigeria

Alfred Ilenre

The Ethnic Minority and Indigenous Rights Organisation of Africa feels honoured to be associated with the activities of the World Council of Churches, the Christian Council of Ghana and Indigenous Information Network, organisers of the workshop on "Land, Environment and Racism" in the historic town of Accra, Ghana.

The African continent in the last four decades of independence had been exposed to increasing pressures on its population, culture, politics and economy. The main goal of EMIROAF is to spotlight the plight in which Indigenous and ethnic minority communities have found themselves in the emerging African nation states. We have conducted series of study cases on issues affecting ethnic minority and indigenous communities including the Ogoni tribe in Nigeria whose spokesman, Mr. Ken Saro Wiwa was killed in 1995 along with eight other activists for their struggle for indigenous rights, by the Nigerian dictatorship regime under the leadership of the late General Sani Abacha.

Democratisation

The whole world including Africa is moving at a high velocity, drawn by the forces of democratisation, globalisation, environmental change, debt burden, population growth, uncontrolled urbanisation, and deforestation. Democracy may talk about majority rule but it is also about the protection of indigenous – minority rights. It is when the rights of minorities are protected that the majority can have its way. In African nation states, indigenous and ethnic minority affairs are often ignored when considering matters of state policy. Africa is a creation of European colonialism where different indigenous communities, ethnic group, tribes and nationalities were forcefully brought together in nation states without their consent. It may be true that all the former colonies in Africa have now gained independence with the collapse of the last vestige of apartheid leading to the independence of South Africa in 1993. Colonial regimes have been scraped but unfortunately many of the structures with which colonialism operated are still intact. Old tribal hatreds are dangerously rearing their violent heads in Africa. The artificial boundaries created by the colonialists have continued to be sources of conflict.

Current Thinking

There are various strands of indigenous and local communities all over the globe. The opinion held previously by many African government that there are no indigenous peoples in black Africa is fast giving way to the reality that Africa is the abode to many indigenous communities. There is no African government official living in the major city

centers that does not have a village, a rural settlement or an indigenous community to return to at the end of his or her city life.

Our research has proved that the fate of majority groups like Ogoni, Ijaw, Edo, Urhobo, Kawa, Kabye, Sandama and many other indigenous groups in West Africa is not different from that of the Aborigines of Australia, the Maori of New Zealand and the Indigenous Americans of Latin America. They all have the common colonial experience of the usurpation of their land and resources, degradation of the forests and the gradual decimation of the people.

Racism as rightly defined by many experts has both the visible and invisible aspects and their effects on indigenous communities are devastating. Indigenous communities do not realise what is happening to them, mostly under the colonial imposed African nation states, until it has become too late.

Public Education

Indigenous peoples having their distinct territories, cultures and languages have the right to self-determination. The struggle for autonomy by indigenous communities within the nation state have become source of conflicts in many West African States. Only when there is group freedom that people of the same pedigree can freely determine their political, economic, social, religious and cultural development.

Indigenous peoples in the modern day nation states in Africa should have the right to determine the form, structure and scope of their own institutions. To achieve these objectives, there is the need for mass awareness education for indigenous peoples in assessing and articulating their problems.

Regional Strengthening

We are at the mid-term of the international decade of indigenous populations declared by the United Nations in 1994. Many member states of the United Nations have adopted specific strategies of how to relate with indigenous peoples. In Africa, there has been a growing awareness campaign to identify the proper place and definition of African indigenous peoples in the international system.

EMIROAF has been part of this educational crusade. From September 7 – 12, 1998, the first pan-African conference on indigenous peoples, traditional knowledge, forest dwellers and biological diversity was organised by EMIROAF in collaboration with the International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests. It was attended by 81 delegates, nine from Europe and America and the rest drawn from 23 African States made up of representatives of ethnic group, indigenous organisations,

community leaders, government agencies, NGOs, tribal and forest dependant communities.

Some of the issues discussed are:

- Indigenous culture, history, economy and African nation-states
- Land management and campaign against development aggression
- Colonial boundaries, nation states and Indigenous Peoples in Africa
- Indigenous Peoples and biological diversity
- Gender perspectives.

Experiences

The conference provided platforms for participants to share experiences on issues faced by indigenous nationalities, tribal peoples and forest dependent communities under the unworkable atmosphere of African governments. It is apparent that indigenous peoples form minority groups in African States. Thus they play a very insignificant role in governance. The nation states are reluctant to grant self-determination or allow indigenous communities to profess their distinct identity.

Plan of Action

The waves of democratisation now sweeping over Africa is posing fresh challengers to indigenous peoples. It is evident that the IMF and the World Bank propelled democracy is becoming a reality in Africa and many African governments are throwing away the toga of military or one party dictatorship for democratic governance. The poser is, how favourable is the new global system to indigenous peoples. There is a school of thought that believes that a strategy has to be adopted to make use of the available democratic mechanisms to fight indigenous cause. The implications of globalisation for indigenous peoples both in the economic and political structure is yet to be studied and analysed.

To the average African, globalisation is another name for racism as the conditionalities imposed on economic aids and loans to African governments continued to create mass unemployment, diseases and extreme poverty. The structural adjustment programmes has further worsened the poverty situation. Instead of poverty alleviation, globalisation is rather reinforcing poverty. There is a growing gap between the rich and the poor people more that ever before the inception of SAP.

African states have proved to be too weakly connected with the dynamics of globalisation and as such do not have the means to compete with the new challenges. The years of structural adjustments have been terribly bad and seen by indigenous Africans as another

form of racism. Thus the need arises to draw up a new plan of action for indigenous peoples to reappraise their strategies on how to confront the new form of racism. Though subtle, the new form of racism is more deadly than outright colonialism.

Kananwi Wayi

When the issue of threats to land and its effect on the life of indigenous communities is raised, what easily comes to mind are underlying factors responsible for these threats and subsequent destruction of land. Prominent among them include population increase, poverty, unregulated logging, technology, bad cultural practices, mining, wars etc.

Communities that experience increase in population are prone to reckless exploitation of the available natural resources in their domains. Population increase brings about increase in consumption. Yet, natural endowment of every society is often limited. Hence, members of such communities always struggle over the available natural resources. In the process, marginal lands are cultivated, shifting cultivation is abandoned for all-season cultivation, reckless felling of trees and a frenzied exploitation of other sundry forest products in order to survive. Demand for more infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, pipe-borne water, electricity etc. also increases. And because all these requires the use of natural resources like land and wood they are exploited. In this struggle, pressure is mounted on the environment leading to damage to the environment.

Threat of Poverty

Poverty remains a source of concern to indigenous peoples around the globe. Poverty forces indigenous peoples to exploit every available natural resources which are found around them to sustain life.

Because there is often general lack of financial capacity to afford farming implements and fishing gears, they therefore depend mostly on hunting and gathering. Those who embark on cultivation are unable to afford chemically manufactured fertilizer that could improve yield. They therefore contend with the meager yield which they are able to produce every season.

There is general dependency on the use of fuelwood as source of energy. This becomes necessary since other sources of energy such as kerosene and coal cost a lot of money. In some cases, the supply of fuelwood to operators of cottage industries like fish smoking, local gin brewing, local restaurants etc. from the urban cities provides a sort of employment to the people.

This situation tends to encourage indiscriminate felling of trees. When logging is allowed to thrive unregulated, trees and other forest products will naturally be depleted, and subsequently forest degradation will occur.

Threat of Technology

Technology in the form of chain saws poses a threat to land as it encourages indiscriminate felling of trees, causes noise pollution and drives away animals in the forests. Before the advent of chain saw, it took two or more days, more men and less noise to cut down one tree. The rate at which trees were being cut was minimal, and less manpower was required to traverse the forest conveying timbers.

The Ogoni ecology is a classical example of a devastated ecosystem where the water beneath the earth has been confirmed polluted, according to scientific discovery. This is a sad situation that resulted from over 35 years of mining crude oil and its transformation into different types of petroleum products by multinational companies in collaboration with the national governments.

Ogoni is an indigenous community with a distinct language, culture, traditional practices and history located in the south-south of Nigeria. The population numbered about 500,000. The Ogoni people believe that the land (soil) is god and worship as such. Land is honoured at festivals. Like most indigenous people, Ogoni people inherited a nature dominated and vibrant land in the early times. Vegetations and crops blossomed unimpeded and life was generally abundant. It was easier for families to sustain themselves sufficiently and also produce for the market with peasant productive capacity.

Most forests were regarded as sacred, believing them to possess some spiritual attributes thereby regulating movement and preventing any tampering that would impact negatively on the forests. Only the spiritually ordained who made propitiations to the gods, traditional healers who seek medicinal plants, the hunters who hunt for bush meat and women who went in search of broken branches as fuelwood, fruits and vegetables for preparation of family meals and fodder for domestic animals, ventured into the forests. These forests were closed forests, having a complex network system that makes it difficult for thoroughfare. The arrival of multinational oil mining companies brought death to the Ogoni environment.

The mining companies flare gas which emit poisonous chemicals into the air. Where these activities take place in close proximity to human habitation, local people inhale the poisons and bears the consequences. When rain falls, the poisons come down in form of rain water which in most cases are fetched by the people since they do not have alternative source of drinkable water. The water is used for preparing food and as drinkable water.

Today, so much noise generated by different brands of chain saws have driven away animals like rabbit, grasscutter, squirrel and other creeping elements that constituted parts of the forests, while hundreds of trees are felled within one day using sophisticated machines.

Bad cultural practices include the way religions are practice. This is because it is said that religion is subsumed in culture.

Indigenous peoples having been worst afflicted by poverty and disease always sort spiritual solutions to their problems. In their quests for a spiritual solution to their afflictions they and their land fall victims of bad cultural practice. Their cultures, traditional practices and spiritual beliefs are stereotyped and attacked. Sacred places and shrines are attacked while vast lands and forests areas that are stereotyped by the religious bodies as harbouring evil spirits are donated by convert members of the communities for building of places of worships. In most cases, such places are set on fire as a process of exorcising it. Yet, we are aware that indigenous peoples have been protecting their culture and environment with their own myth and spiritual beliefs.

The Ogoni Experience

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have alternative source of drinkable water. The water is use for preparing food and as drinkable water.

Chemical Pollution

The land itself dies from the acute negative impact of the poisonous chemicals. Which leaves the environment dead, poverty and disease ensued and subsequently death of humanbeings. Families sold trees in their forests to loggers to eke a living, and within few years, there is massive forests degradation and enviromnental devastation in Ogoni.

The national government dominated by enviromnentially insensitive officials although established enviromnental protection department, but with quite a dismal performance. Reasons such as lack of institutional capacity building, control by enviromnentially bankrupt officials from poor ecological zones of the country, as well as lack of transparency have been adduced for its dismal performance.

For instance, inorder to maximize profit the mining companies make use of substandard equipment, lay high pressure oil pipes on earth surface through peoples' homes and farmlands and bribe government officials. When oil spill occurs, it usually destroys as large portion of land and streains as the spill could cover. If the oil company responsible is approached by members of the conimunity to clear the spill, rejuvenate the land and pay compensation for damages occasioned by the spill, they are referred to their governments.

If members of the community protest against such insensitivity to the enviromnent, the company will react by asking for security assistance from the governments which are usually provided immediately. And while clearing ways for the company to continue operation unhindered despite its negative impact on the environment, members of the community are the worse for it. They are fell by gun shots, harassed, intimidated, arrested and detained on behalf of the oil companies. Yet, the companies dare not attempt any of the above in the industrialized world where they also operate or they would be the worse for it.

It is as well an unpardonable crime in Europe and America, homes of the mining companies where they also operate, to ever contemplate the use of substandard equipment and not to bury oil pipes. Hence, we say that multinational oil companies operating in Nigeria practices double standards.

Conclusion

Therefore, the need to tackle poverty by encouraging economie empowerment programmes like craft training, provision of soft loans and small grants for members of indigenous communities has becomes imperative.

Also, organizing workshops, meeting and advertorials as a sort of enlightenment programme to educate the people to understand the dangers of population increase, bad cultural practice and how to resist economic activities that are environmentally insensitive. Such meetings could be carried out by community based organizations, cultural groups and other NGOS, if given the support.

Cameroon

Assabe Aminaton

Cameroon is found in West-Central Africa, it has a surface area of about 475.000 square km. From its coastal area inland up to the northern region, the country is characterised by the distinct vegetation zones, which are closely related to the climate. This is from the southern region to the far north; the natural regions are equatorial forest, Guinea Savannah, grassland and the Sahel region respectively.

Cameroon is blessed with so many tribes or ethnic groupings. It has about two hundred and sixty (260) tribes and languages. Among these ethnic groups, there are major and minors ones. However, we should take note of the few indigenous ones. These are pygmies — the Mbororos and the Kirdi's of Kapsiki mountains.

The migratory movement of the various ethnic groups over the national territory is significant, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries. The most powerful groups or tribes fought to displace the weaker ones to occupy the most favourable valleys.

The Mbororo tribe, called the Nomadic Fulani who are found mostly on the high lands especially in the northwestern region, eastern region and the northern region of Cameroon, were said to have been wondering in the western part of Sudan around the 17th and 18th century. They entered Cameroon in the 18th century and spread all over the Savannah region which were favourable to cattle grazing in addition to a few natural and useful salt springs (Laores) on the plateaus.

Causes and Manifestations

After arrival, the Mbororos enjoyed vast expanses of Savannah lands on the higher areas of the plateaus while the groups met, constituted small hamlets or villages, and were mostly clustered along the valley regions. Thus there was no threat on their grazing lands.

However threat to land and racist tendencies sparked off in recent times, as a result of the following factors:

1. Population explosion as a result of high birth rates, due to improved medical

facilities, good sanitation and better feeding habits by the other well organised and sedentary ethnic groups. This has led to the need of more farmland.

2. Ignorant peasant farmers due to the lack of sustainable use of farmland plus destructive practices like the burning of soil to obtain bulky yields. The increase in erosion of fertile top soils around the villages has led farmers to abandon their inherited lands in favour of the virgin areas on the highlands. This has resulted in hatred, conflicts (farmer-grazer problems) between the cattle-raising Mbororos and the other ethnic communities who are mostly farmers.

In the past decades we have witnessed serious conflicts that have led to loss of human and animal lives and privation of liberties. This has taken many forms like surprise attacks by a significant number of farmers armed with machetes and sticks on a few Mbororo's in their settlements. A few months ago around the Cameroon-Nigeria frontier, 4 Mbororo family heads were killed by farmers in a surprise attack while they were on transhumans. They have after used the valley during dry seasons, but on this faithful day the farmers decided to finish up with them. They were unprepared and so had no means to defend themselves. Cattle poisoning and cutting is also frequent.

Another cause is that the other ethnic groups are also beginning to see the significance of cattle rearing. This has made many to keep cattle. To render this possible, land must be obtained even if it means using unholy means. This takes the form of ranches. To establish these ranches which need vast expanses of grazing land, the Mbororos have to be driven away. Most of the ranchers are either Government Ministers or National party leaders who have Government support. A good example is the Elba ranch in the northwest province of Cameroon. A ranch owner, a national party baron with the support of government officials expelled eight thousand herds of cattle over more than one thousand hectares of grazing land to implant his ranch, with no compensation to the Mbororos who have been there for over a century. Those who resisted were arrested and jailed.

There are also other tricky methods used to expel and exploit the Mbororos. For example, after a long period of grazing, the cattle dung would have fertilised the land enough to grow good vegetables. Sometimes, a Mbororo family would get up and find a farm in front of his home and there trouble begins. Other methods are to plant useful trees in their land in pretext for producing seedlings. Later he would fence his trees and that part of the land would become his. When the Mbororo man would seek for legal action from the village chief, the major, the law becomes an exploitation machinery which further aggravates the situation for the Mbororo man.

Worst of all, the dominant groups otherwise called "sons of the soil" strongly believe that all the land belong to them by birth and that the Mbororos are strangers. This

triggers racism and conflicts and results in a lot of sufferings on the Mbororo communities. The land law aspects are mostly vague and confusing. The issued of all land in Cameroon being national land is theoretical rather than practical. As the results of this, most of the advantages go to the farmers to the detriment of the Mbororo grazers who pay a cattle tax each year.

In short, these are the types of environmental racism that the Mbororos are facing in Cameroon. The Mbororos are not the only marginalised groups suffering from land and environmental racism. There are also the Pygmies from the Kirdis of Kapsiki mountains. The Cameroon equatorial forest has saved the Pygmies as this served as their habitat for many centuries. Research shows that the Pygmies are the first inhabitants of Cameroon. Its serves as the source of their food and medicine. For the past decades, there has been an uncontrolled and abusive exploitation of the forest. This would imply the total destruction of the way of life of the Pygmies — no home, no food, no medicine. There is a lot of good talk from the government, timber companies and NGO's to put an end to the abusive exploitation, to settle the Pygmies and improve their social and economic life. Talking is one thing, doing is another. In fact if there is anything positive for the Pygmies, it is through the benevolent work of the churches especially the European missionaries. If nothing is done to reduce or stop this abusive exploitation of the forest, the effect on its inhabitants and that of the environment in general is at stake.

In the far north, the Kirdis of the Kapsiki mountains found themselves on this unfriendly rocky environment during the course of the *jihad* wars in the 18th century. They climbed up the rocky mountains to protect themselves from the Muslims warriors. After the wars, they had to remain up as the valleys where they used to live was already occupied by those who conquered them. They had to struggle to make the place liveable at least and today despite all the hardship, it has become their land. To grow crops, they go down the valley, find soil and carry them in buckets, climb up and put it in mounds in order to grow crops for their subsistence.

Land, Environment and Racism: Its Consequences on the Indigenous Women

The consequences of land and environmental racism on Indigenous women are untold. When the men and the cattle are killed or ousted from their natural environment where they have been for over a century, most of them can't stand the new unfavourable lands and are therefore destined to extinction.

The next step would be that the men would leave to cities to look for an alternative means of leaving. The women and their children are left behind with no means to survive.

Some go along with the men to live in slums in the cities where the men with no education do the most mean jobs to survive.

In general, the indigenous men of the Kirdis pygmies or the Mbororos have the same destinies. They do not have formal education so they work mostly for other communities by doing mean jobs to survive. This would imply that even in cities as well as in their homes, their children and wives can't go to school nor have medical health care, nor live in decent homes.

This is a cause for concern, and the world as a whole would have to hear on its back this shameful situation into the 21st century.

Togo

Ella Midekor

Mesdames, Messieurs, chers militants,

C'est au nom de l'association le SAPEDH (African Service for Peace and Human Rights) que je prends la parole pour remercier avant toute chose les organisateurs de cette rencontre internationale sur les droits des peuples autochtones et le Forum permanent.

The future success of the Indigenous peoples in their struggle is very much tied.

C'est pour moi, une femme non seulement un honneur d'être ici parmi mes soeurs et frères, mais aussi un réel plaisir car il est question de droits.

Ceux-ci ont longtemps été reniés aux femmes surtout en Afrique. Mais pour ce qui est des femmes autochtones en particulier, j'aimerais insister sur le fait que nous sommes victimes d'une discrimination:

La première découle de la discrimination dont l'ensemble des peuples autochtones souffrent dans leur pays respectif. Ils n'ont pas le droit d'accéder à certaines responsabilités, de faire certaines activités...

La seconde c'est celle qui touche particulièrement les femmes autochtones, reléguées par leur mari au rang d'objet...

C'est en égard à toutes ces observations que je lance ici un appel solennel pour que cesse des pratiques d'autres âges envers les femmes autochtones du continent noir, celles qui sont porteuses de vie et d'espoir

Je vous en remercie vivement

Sierra Leone

Hon. P.C. Bai Sebor Somanah III

It is a pleasing opportunity for me to participate in this seminar dealing with crucial and fundamental issues that affect man and his environment.

I want to thank the organisers of the seminar for the bold initiative; an initiative that perceived a truth that had escaped many in the past namely, that the issues of land, environment, and racism are inextricably linked and constitute the main sources of conflict in many parts of the world. The challenge therefore, is how to use these as resource or building blocks in the creation of a "just and equitable society."

Land and its use from time immemorial have always been at the center of all political upheavals. The feudal system, which flourished in Europe during the middle ages, had its foundation on the ownership and utilisation of land. The great political revolutions, i.e. French, Bolshevik and Chinese Revolutions had their causes and effects in the land tenure systems that operated in those countries. Land therefore was the key element in determining the political and economic destiny of a country.

I recognise that we are all indigenous men and women gathered here to discuss our problems, experiences and concerns about the "struggle against threats to life and nature such as environmental racism and forest exploitation." Each of our countries has specific problems that are peculiar to the character of its own circumstance. But in nearly all of our countries, the fundamental challenge to indigenous peoples is land and its utilisation to better man's lot in life.

The system of land tenure varies from country to country and under different political systems. One factor which remains salient however is that events have occurred in almost all our countries that have put land in the forefront of the challenges that face our individual countries. Colonisation, population growth, economic progress dubbed as globalisation, militarisation and forced displacement due to either wars or economic activity have had and continue to have enormous impact on land, environment and racism.

For the purpose of clarity, I want to attempt a short elaboration on the impact of colonisation and globalisation on land, environment and racism with a perceptive-eye on Africa.

It is important to note that the impact of colonisation on land and racism is of towering proportions. The era of colonisation commenced as far back in the early 17th century and reached its climax with the "Partition of Africa" in the 19th Century. The European countries that took part drew up boundaries to create modern forms of states, a process

which "fragmented and interfered with the way of life of indigenous peoples". The systems of apartheid in South Africa, a classic example of racism, is deeply embedded in the land tenure system and so was the "mau mau" movement in Kenya which had its trappings in the system of land distribution. The current political upheaval in Zimbabwe is tied up with agitation for land reform spearheaded by the "war veterans".

The impact of globalisation which takes the form of economic progress and technological innovation on land is enormous. Multinational corporations engaged in mining and other economic activities on large scale have forced displacement of massive proportions. The impact of these activities on the environment has also been severe.

I now came home to my country - Sierra Leone. The colonial government introduced a two-tier system of land tenure. In the then colony which is now the Western area, the British government introduced a system of "free-hold" which made it possible for land to be disposed of in compliance with the law. However, in the case of the protectorate, which is comprised of three regions as North, South and East, ownership of the land as encapsulated in Cap 60 of the protectorate Act 1960 is vested in the Paramount Chief and Tribal Authority. In effect ownership of the land cannot be disposed of by outright sale. The primary purpose of this provision is to give protection to the indigenous peoples.

Sierra Leone is a predominantly agricultural country. The main pre-occupation of over 80% Sierra Leoneans is agriculture which today accounts for 60% of the country's national income. Land therefore is at the center stage or the basis of survival for the average Sierra Leonean. As previously stated, the legal provision which governs the land tenure system in the provincial areas is designed to give protection to the indigenous peoples. The question however which continues to engender debate is that the land tenure by its nature impedes the achievement of our country's economic potential.

The mining sector which is a crucial component in Sierra Leone's economy has threatened the environment. Diamond, Bauxite and Rutile mining have had adverse consequences on the environment.

Finally, Sierra Leone has been in a fortunate situation as the land tenure system is not only devoid of racism but seeks to protect the interests of the indigenous peoples.

Rev. James G.S. Kabangai

Mr. Chairman, my co-delegates at this workshop, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I stand to contribute to our topic of discussion today, namely, Indigenous Peoples: Land, Environment and Racism with direct reference to Sierra Leone, a small country of 27,000. I wish to commence my presentation by directly addressing myself to the

third word in the caption of our topic, namely, *racism*. I take it in my initial approach because the mention of it anywhere immediately arrests one's attention. Before I go further, let me attempt to analyse what *racism* is or may mean.

Racism is the antagonism between different races, or the belief that one's own race is superior to another person's own. It is an assumption of inherent racial superiority of a certain race, and consequent discrimination against another race as being inferior. It is a prejudice favouring a bias, leading to hatred by one race because of its feelings and beliefs of being superior in every way, to another race. More often than not, the white man places himself confidently and firmly in that category of superiority, against the coloured man, very often, the black race.

Whether we like it or not, racism is a very scary and sensitive ideology that is evident in all countries of the world, though the depth and prominence of its practice varies from country to country. In some countries, it is or it used to be a policy like apartheid South Africa before the era of Mandela's premiership. In some other countries like some states in the United States of America, even though it is not a policy, the practice is sometimes openly manifested while others are carried on underground.

I come from a country that does not know racism as I have defined and exemplified above because we have only one race of indigenous peoples in that country, namely *Sierra Leoneans*. Although we have 13 ethnic Groups, each with its own distinct language, culture and traditional practices, we are proud to say there is no discrimination anywhere.

It is interesting to know that during 15th & 16th centuries when Europeans were founding colonies (some for economic reasons while others wanted new settlements), the *Anopheles Mosquito* saved Sierra Leone from white settlement because many of them died as a result of the malaria that this mosquito caused them. This is why Sierra Leone is recorded in the history of those times as the white man's grave.

However, what we have experienced that led to many episodes of the 10-year civil war that attempted to rip our country apart is only a situation where people of probably a few of the 13 ethnic groups teamed up to oppose the status quo that had been carefully put together by our constitution. The issue seemed to emanate from different ethnic backgrounds. It was probably also a situation where a few people attempted to keep all of the national cake on their own tables alone, not caring what happened to the vast majority of the local people. Perhaps one might as well add that it was a situation where a few people who had the political know-how at manipulating issues turned the few against the many for their own greedy and selfish ends.

It is true that today, racism has evolved from the visible and clear-cut black man, white man racism and it has taken up forms which are not easy to see. Nevertheless, it is still present in many societies.

In our country, one potential area of difference and division between our people is politics or, if I may, political racism. Today there are 18 political parties, 14 of which have their roots in the northern part of the country, while 4 have their roots in the south and east.

The ordinary people feel that the 10-year civil war went the same way. The majority of the population having similar ideas, probably tied together by ethnic sentiments wanted to subdue the minority by force of arms. This what I have referred to as *political racism*.

Thank God for religious tolerance in our country. Nevertheless, there are people who still do not encourage the north-south ethnic divide. My Paramount Chief, my co-delegate, is a natural ruler from a northern chiefdom, and I come from the south but here we are, both of us, rubbing shoulders together to attend this workshop.

Today, there are many people like us in our country. That is why we preach that tribalism — that cancer, that interregional politics introduced into our society by the few at the top — would not be allowed to raise its head in our midst.

I now turn to the question of environmental racism. In our country, we also know that there is a direct relationship between the increase in economic activity, both nationally and internationally, and infringement on our environment.

Our country was once known as "Sierra Leone, the land of Iron and Diamonds". I should also add rutile, gold, zircon, and bauxite. To mine these, either the dry or wet extraction method is used. Both of these methods are capable of exerting a severe degrading impact on both the terrestrial and the aquatic ecosystem of the areas. The practice adopted by some of these mining companies to relocate the indigenous people whose lands are being mined affects the social lives of those people to a large extent. They are often taken to another part of the chiefdom which is not their own ancestral land, where they would have no jobs, no farm lands and no alternative means of livelihood. The people become lost, completely lost, and only the mines are able to see their way out of the melee.

In my home chiefdom Imperri, as a case in point, four (4) rutile mines have operated there for the past 45 years. Before there were some villages and the only thing one can see now is a vast lake, many miles long and 40-60 feet deep in some places. The companies said they were bringing in fish so that *our people would no longer depend on farming because all our farmlands are gone and the we should become fishermen*. They brought *tilapia*. They can grow to the size of half a person's palm in 4 months and they are harvested for food. They are 80% bones or more. But *tilapia* feed on the upper 3 feet of the water and do not go into deep water. So what should our people do with

the big lakes they now have? Every year people drown in them and that is a catastrophic problem for those who live around those lakes. But Sierra Leone must mine and export rutile so that the factories in the U.S.A. could build aircrafts, spacecrafts, paint pigment etc.

But our people do not care much for fish which is 80% bones. Should our ancestral lands be turned into huge lakes where some of these bony things should be bred? Don't we have our local crabs? They too are about 80% calcareous matter like *tilapia* but they are more delicious. What is more, we do not have to destroy our land and environment to breed them. These mines have silted all our swamps where we get fish and crabs. They build dams which later burst and release a lot of water which sometimes seeps through our villages. Where they have removed the good soil, we can no longer farm. Now, we have to leave our places in the relocated villages to go to our kinsmen in neighbouring chiefdoms to grow food.

In Imperri chiefdom where I come from and where 4 (four) rutile mines have operated during the past 45 years, 16 villages have been thus mined out, with one village (Gbessebu) being mined out twice. I do not know whether to call it pure bad luck for the villagers but after completing one round of mining there, they went there again. What they left to that village is quite a different story.

Our people are mainly animist. They believe in ancestral worship also. When a child is born, he is a reincarnation of an ancestor and the child is named after a grandmother, grandfather or uncle etc., that is, after position of the dead ancestor. Our people beg the ancestors for one favour or another and go to complain to them about issues that disturb the family or the community. Many of these ancestral worships are done on specific days, in big pump and pageantry, and in thick sacred forests, some of which may be 300 years old.

But the mines have uprooted many of these "Sacred Bushes". Recently, the grave of the legendary "Solonto" who was warrior King of the Mbelleh area was desecrated. Solonto left one single footprint on a rock for posterity to see his power. The rock was moved from its position and left lying elsewhere. Even Mbelleh, the head town of the chiefdom was mined out. Today on the site of Mbelleh is a big lake. What we do not know is whether our children will know that they are Mbelleh people, now that rutile mines have turned all those lands into lakes and unproductive plots in terms of farming.

As it is, we cannot stop mining activities. We cannot stop the government for carrying out its economic pursuits. What we could do, if we are permitted to, is to make contributions and suggestions, which will improve our lot in the most of the mining activities. We, the indigenous peoples, could still hear the voices of our children pouring libation to us, asking for our assistance and blessings.

When the mining activities get to our areas, the authorities should listen to our voices in the planning and activities and this kind of involvement should be ongoing, as long as the mining lasts. Also, it should be a direct contact between the company and the indigenous peoples.

The Church could be a forum where indigenous peoples can discuss their ideas. Where every member of the community is not a Christian, then the Church could act as a catalyst to bring the various stakeholders together and facilitate their activities, giving them the necessary support when they have to meet officials of the government to put their case.

Ghana

Prince Kwame Wiafe

ECOTOURISM: Tourism In Partnership With Environmental Protection and Community Development

It is with great privilege and honour that I present to you this paper entitled "Ecotourism - "Tourism in Partnership with Environmental Protection and Rural Community Development".

The distinguished previous speakers have dwelt a lot on various aspects of the theme of the conference and I am only here to contribute my little quota to this urgent forum.

It is pertinent to note that the modern age has deprived our people from deriving the full benefits of the land they inhabit. Due to commercialisation, the indigenes of the land have country.

virtually no control of their land as vast tracks of the land have either been taken over by governments and multinationals much to the detriment of the people. Dams have been built across rivers and leaving the people with lands inundated by water, mining activities have degraded the farm lands leaving the people with no lands to farm on.

Ecotourism and Environment

Mass tourism has undoubtedly contributed to the negative impact that we see on the environment and society as a whole. It is in the light of this that this paper seeks to highlight the importance of ecotourism as a partner to environmental protection and rural community development. Mass tourism has led to the importation of previously unknown negative social habits into our society.

Ecotourism is normal tourism activities with a plus. It is a subset of tourism activities that require a purposeful travel to a natural area to understand the culture and natural history of the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem while producing economic opportunities that make conservation of the natural resources beneficial to the local community.

Simply put, ecotourism is a combination of activities that ensure environmental protection, tourism industry sustenance and prevention of a people's cultural pollution while using the many benefits of tourism to promote their socio-economic welfare and over-all development. Ecotourism is environmentally friendly, a protector of traditional lifestyles and flora and fauna of the selected area.

Traditional methods of conservation

The rural folk have been and still are the ones protecting and preserving biological diversity. They were the only true protectors of the environment until these few years of advanced technology that gropes hopelessly now to find ways of biodiversity conservation.

Through folklore, religious taboos, sanction on days to farm and fish and seasonal bans, they tried to manage their natural resources. Contrary to the view that these sanctions were acts of paganism, there is abundant proof that these laws which were strictly adhered to were meant to protect the ecological system. For example shrines were created at water sheds with a strict ban on farming activities around the shrines for fear of involving the wrath of the river-god, but with time it has been realised that this was done to protect the water sources. This was also extended to forest reserves and even to animals. Certain species of trees and animals were protected by being placed under temporally band at one time or the other. These were done to protect endangered species of flora and fauna.

The activities of the modern man has led to a lot of degradation of the environment. Wanton felling of tress has led to the destruction of whole forests. There has been no sustained reforestation projects. As mentioned earlier mining and commercial activities have led to acute degradation of the land and the pollution of the environment respectively.

Flouting of previously adhered to religious taboos and norms of our ancestors which protected the environment have contributed immensely to the degradation of our environment.

The use of plastic materials which virtually defy decomposition have also been a very negative factor on the preservation of our environment.

Infrastructure development of our countryside by way of roads, factories and other modern commercial activities (e.g. mining) without a systematic regard to the environment has also impacted negatively on our environment.

Benefits

The benefits of ecotourism to the rural community is immense. It seeks to involve the chiefs and people of the community as partners in the development of the tourism industry. Apart from developing tourists sites in the community, ecotourism seeks to provide the community with modern infrastructure like chalets, restaurants, hotels, entertainment golf, to induce the tourist to stay at the tour sites for a while. This will go a long way to raise the standard of living of the rural community. It also seeks to establish cottage industries in the rural community to service the tourist industry. Apart from giving employment for the rural folk it aims to improve the education and health facilities of the rural community and this raises their level of consciousness on environmental preservation and goes a long way in helping them to protect their ecology from "economic mercenaries".

Conclusion

In order to make ecotourism succeed in partnership with environmental protection and rural community development, I appeal to governments to establish effective mechanisms for the conservation of our natural environment such as our forests, rivers and our rich historical and cultural heritage. Organisations and religious bodies are entreated to join the crusade to better the gains of ecotourism, address the question of infrastructure opportunities such as formal education and other related areas known to be discriminated against in terms of gender.

It is my hope that this platform will send clear signals to government to intensify their campaign for ecotourism promotion as a way to help environmental protection to make this planet earth a comfortable place to live in.

Richard Aprontt

According to the UN working definition, "indigenous peoples" are composed of existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them and by conquest, settlement or other means reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial situation". (Roy Burman, B.K. "Indigenous and tribal peoples, Global Hegemonies and Government of India" Mainstream, 5th Sept 1992, p.31)

Indigenous peoples are not specifically mentioned in the UN declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), though they are included in the catch all concept – "everyone." However,

because their rights have not been specifically articulated, these have often been grossly violated, the most common of which is their right to stay in territories which they have inhabited for generations. For example, enclosing the forests where indigenous peoples live, (whether for commercial reasons, to create national parks, to establish a mine, to build a dam, or for whatever purpose) breaks their life sustaining links and is a denial of their right to life. Such displacement has an adverse impact on individuals as well as on the group, resulting to loss of dignity, education, health, and spiritual satisfaction. The right to food includes the right to wild foods and fuel with which to cook them.

Historically, human rights have been rarely honoured in societies of both East and West. Human rights violations by Eastern 'barbarians' and 'savages', however, have often been recorded in detailed Western-authored histories, while those of the 'civilised' West have been usually composed in carefully refined versions. A narrative of internal violence, territorial theft, racial brutality and rationalised genocide carried out mostly by European 'civilising' missions would help in setting the theme for this short paper.

Without losing sight of the fact that the theme of this paper is the root causes of environmental destruction and its relationship to racism, I feel the need to stress the fact that the struggles of human rights and environmental movements can only be understood against the historical background of these struggles.

It is often easy to overlook the fact that environmental destruction is a much older phenomenon. For example, Europe, in the Middle Ages during the Crusades, suffered from shortages of food and other necessities such as fuel and construction wood. (see Kirkpatrick sale, *The Conquest of Paradise*, Hodder and Soughton, London, 1990:32)

These were obvious signs that its population had already exceeded the carrying capacity of its environment, the spectre of famine continuously threatening. While local wars and uprisings vented some of the pressures building up, it was the "discovery" of the Caribbean Islands and the Americas, with their vast resources of land and labour, fields and forests, silver and gold, that allowed the emigration of surplus citizens of overpopulated Europe to other continents. This provided a major outlet for the combustible energies of people who had nowhere to go. Such deliverance required the conquest by force of other peoples, the occupation of their vast territories, their enslavement, their displacement into "reservations" and often their genocidal extermination. In this process, racism was endemic with the rights allowed to Europeans denied to the indigenous peoples of occupied territories.

As Clive Ponting remarked, "Many indigenous societies disintegrated under European pressure when they were not deliberately destroyed. The stark truth is that native peoples lost their land, livelihood, independence, culture, health and in most cases, their lives. Despite differences in approach, the common themes running strongly

through European attitudes in the process of colonisation are the disregard for the native way of life and the overwhelming urge to exploit both the land and the people" (Clive Ponting, *A Green History of the World*, Sinclair Stevenson, Solihull, UK, 1991:130). There are recorded cases where diseases such as small pox and bubonic plague were deliberately spread through infected blankets (see Valerie Taliman, "Waste Merchants Intentionally Poison Natives; Wise, 28 March 1993:10).

In Australia where the aboriginal population was decimated through mass murder, the involved Europeans misused Darwin's theories to claim that "to the Aryan ... belong the destinies of the future. The survival of the fittest means that might, when wisely used, is right. And thus we invoke and fulfil the inexorable law of natural selection when exterminating the inferior Australian" (Frederick Farar and H.K. Rusden, quoted in Raymond Evans, et al., *Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination: Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*).

Rights to natural resources and a clean environment should automatically accrue from the right to life, but the right to "develop" is given precedence. Development is taken to mean an ever-higher level of consumption of material products, requiring increasing qualities of resources. Present methods of exploitation depend on seducing victims with the virtual carrot that similar levels of affluence would be achieved by all if only the West's painful prescription were bravely swallowed. In many poor countries the world over, the local elite who always stand to reap handsome rewards have been persuaded to endorse these types of "development".

Hyper-consumption by a small section of the global population deprives others of their rights. This is particularly serious when the destruction caused by hyper-consumption is irreversible as in the case of the exhaustion of particular resources like fossil fuels and of the loss of animal and plant species. These constitute one of the major rights of other living creatures. This is an abuse that is perpetrated by nearly all citizens in the West and those in poor countries (middle class elite) who imitate the consumption patterns of the West.

While numerous natural resources are being overused by the West today (often taken from the poor countries), it is still the poor developing countries which are being blamed for the resulting damage to the environment when they are only merely taking what has been their time-immemorial right for their own minimal and basic needs. The chief culprit of forest destruction are the remote urban furniture and building industries and assorted mass manufacturers of trivial non-necessities.

The mining and production of fossil fuels as well as their conversion into electricity leads to further human rights abuses. Original populations have to be moved out by force from ancestral lands to make way for coal mines, oil and gas wells, generating

plants and waste dumps. More displacement occurs in the case of hydroelectric power plants because of the huge areas covered by the reservoirs.

Natural resources will remain for many decades to be the most single important source of wealth and power, including state power.

The environment is the mainstay of national, local and homestead economies; and the social and cultural life of the rural majority particularly that of the indigenous peoples revolve around it.

Consequently, the control of natural resources continues to remain the most important struggle for the vast majority of rural people as well as the indigenous.

As population increases and economic liberalisation offers broader opportunities for private investment, competition for these resources intensifies and as such, environmental mismanagement and nature based corruption also increases whilst competition, including violent conflict, over natural resources escalates. The forms of the competition have ranged from the diamond wars as in Central and West Africa to ethnic clashes and land occupation in East and Southern Africa.

The last four decades have shown that raising the GDP per capita in Africa is difficult. However, Africa's real wealth, its farmland, forest, wildlife, fisheries can provide African citizens the immediate benefits. The problem therefore is how to manage the governance of the environment.

It is hotly argued that resource wars will be the impetus for major conflict in the 21st Century with a devastating effect on Africa. Traditional land rights and cultural sites are under valued when it interferes with gaining access to resources and therefore profits. The impact that extraction and processing industries have on human health and quality does not matter. People are increasingly unwanted and unneeded.

As Africans find their access to land and natural resources increasingly threatened by questionable national interests and economic liberalisation there comes also the exogamous factors.

It is noted that there is a direct relationship between the increasing globalisation of the economy and environmental degradation the living spaces for many of the world's peoples. In many places where Black, minority, poor or indigenous people live, oil, timber and minerals are extracted in such a way as to devastate the ecosystems and destroy their culture and livelihood. Waste from both high and low tech industries, much of it toxic, has polluted groundwater, soil and atmosphere (as in the case of the WASSA Community in the Western Region of Ghana).

Kenya

Nancy Kireu

The Maasai, numbering about 700,000, are an indigenous people living in Kenya. Their livelihood and way of life revolves around livestock, which in turn depends on the land and the resources thereon. These resources include soil, water, vegetation, minerals and wildlife. The Maasai do not eat game meat and therefore game hunting is negligible. They only kill wildlife or other creatures in self-defence. Livestock is killed to provide food. The Maasai consider natural resources as gifts from God and therefore treat their environment with a lot of reverence. This explains why most of wildlife conservation areas are found in predominantly Maasai districts in Kenya and Tanzania. However, the Maasai have lost land over the years and are still losing their land. They lost lands to the British colonisers, land that was never regained, and lost land alienated for the establishment of game parks, concessions, and still are losing land to immigrants. Land loss has been a century-long process of deprivation among the indigenous Maasai of Kenya. The loss of land threatens the existence of the Maasai as a people and as an indigenous population.

Land Loss : Before Colonialism

Before the colonisation of East Africa by the Europeans, the Maasai people occupied and owned good grazing land in Kenya. They managed the land and the resources sustainably and in harmony with nature. They lived as one community and conducted their cultural and social activities according to their norms and traditions. They lived happily and secure. The Maasai were an organised society with rules, norms, defense systems and strategies to cope with calamities such as droughts.

During Colonial Times

Since the arrival of the colonisers and the establishment of the Kenyan colony under the British Empire, the indigenous Maasai have experienced an agonising process of deprivation resulting from land loss. For the whole of the 19th century to year 2001, the loss of land by the Maasai has been a continuous process. The Maasai lost their land to the white settlers through treaties that favoured the settlers. The treaties were made under duress and through forceful persuasion. Between 1904 and 1911, the Maasai lost about 20,000 square miles of land. They were forcefully moved from their land with the use of guns and the Maasai spears were no use as opposed to the British ammunitions.

The Maasai lost about 30% of their land to the white settlers. They further lost more of their land with the creation of game parks such as Amboseli, Maasai Mara, Samburu and Nairobi National Parks. These lands were the best grazing lands, endowed with permanent water sources and suitable as dry season grazing areas where the Maasai

fall back with their livestock during periods of drought. These climatically favourable lands were taken by settlers for beef, dairy, wheat, barley and other cash crops. The Maasai were geographically separated and pushed to the drier areas of the land. Politically, socially and culturally, they were split into groups and separated from each other. The Samburu were cut off to the north, the Ilmokokodo and Itiamus were left separated in isolation in different parts of the Rift Valley and near Mt. Kenya. The other Maasai were pushed to the south which is infested with human and livestock diseases. The promise given to the Maasai by the British was the guarantee that as long as the Maasai lived as a people, no more land would be taken from them. But the British never honoured this promise and the Maasai continued losing their land and even the British are still infringing into what is left of Maasai grazing lands.

Currently, the British Army, on an annual basis, undertakes exercises on the mukokodo grazing lands without the consent of the occupants and subsequently causes damage to the environment and unplanned movement of the Maasai.

During Independent Kenya

When Kenya attained its independence, many white settlers left Kenya. The original Maasai lands did not revert to the Maasai. Instead, the British and the Kenyan governments arranged for purchase of the land and allocated it to the Kikuyu, completely excluding the Maasai from the allocation of the same land. Other communities were given a chance to buy back their land but the Maasai were denied this chance. The Kenyan government facilitated a situation, which encouraged infiltration and settlement by other tribes on lands occupied by the Maasai. The government effected a land tenure system that facilitates sale and purchase of land. Included in the constitution of Kenya is that any Kenyan can buy or own land anywhere in Kenya. But not a single Maasai ever settled outside Maasai land. In recent days, the personalities in power backed by wealth and might of office have swarmed on Maasai land like locusts displacing the indigenous residents through land purchase condoned by the land control board. The majority of the Maasai are illiterate and easily manipulated and tricked out of their land. When a few educated and enlightened Maasai rise up to defend their community, they are arrested, incriminated and arraigned in courts on charges of incitement. This is to intimidate and suppress any growth of awareness and reaction among the Maasai on their land rights.

The Present Situation

Poverty

The remaining available land for the Maasai is limited and inadequate considering the increased population and aridity of the remaining land. This has diminished the carrying

capacity of the land. The income opportunities are limited for the Maasai, as the majority of them never had education necessary for job employment. As a result, the Maasai now live in a state of poverty and are unable to afford education for their children. This state of illiteracy and poverty predispose the Maasai to more marginalisation and vulnerability.

Culture and Separation

Due to the separation of the Maasai into groups which are distant and apart from each other and infiltration of their land by outsiders, their culture & language is threatened. This geographical separation of the Maasai groups from one another also weakens their political solidarity.

Education

The level of literacy among the Maasai of Kenya is very low compared to the national average. The barriers militating against the Maasai children accessing education are enormous. These make the Maasai disadvantaged when dealing with intricate land transactions.

Land Issues

The Maasai have lost 60% of their original land. The process of land alienation is still going on and more accelerated. The natural resources especially wildlife is diminishing due to rampant exploitation by non-indigenous invaders. The land legislation in Kenya is unfriendly to indigenous people.

Our Position

We do not ask for what is not ours, we ask for what is ours. The British owe the Maasai and are answerable for the land we lost through them. The Kenya government is responsible for the land the Maasai lost since independence. The United Nations has a moral obligation to ensure we regain our birthright, our land. The struggle to regain our land is a legitimate course and we shall continue until no more of our land is lost.

Our Claim

Where reclamation of our land, if it is not possible, then appropriate compensation be made to the Maasai. The British must play a leading role in seeking answers to the Maasai land problem. The Maasai and the other indigenous population must have security and control over their land and natural resources and legal mechanisms to prevent land loss through any means. Education for the indigenous populations must be given priority to enable them to compete with the other communities as equals. Land rights for the indigenous peoples are human rights and must be guaranteed.

Saina Sena-

Ogiek Kenya

My fellow indigenous brothers and sisters, I salute you in the name of Tororet. May I take this opportunity to give a hint on the reason why we are gathered here in this historic occasion to review and reaffirm our strategies in our struggles against threats to life and nature such as environmental racism, dispossession of our land and forest exploitation.

We, the Ogiek, have fallen victims of government policies and laws which are totally in conflict with our interests. We are also victims of inherited colonial laws which the politically correct exploit for their own selfish gains. Today we are victims of genocidal conflicts between powerful forces jockeying for power and control over natural resources.

Background

The Ogiek are an indigenous minority found in Kenya and Tanzania in East Africa. They are hunters and gatherers and live in the high forest regions of Kenya, hence a forest based people. The Ogiek first migrated into the Mt. Kenya forest in 1750 A.D and later as social, climatic and political factors dictated, dispersed into other forest reserves namely Mau Forest and Mount Elgon Forest. They entirely depend on the forest for their livelihood - harvesting honey, wild fruits and traditional medicine.

In their territorial forest they live in clans and each clan collects honey in their respective territorial forest. The Ogiek are few in number with an estimate population of 30,000 peoples. 90% of the Ogiek to date still live in the forest. The forest is their ancestral homeland with great significance to their traditional values and sacred sites. The Mau forest, Mt. Elgon and Mt. Kenya are known as Ogiek residential forests. In Mau Narok, they border the Maasai and Kalenjin to the East of Mau forest.

The Ogiek have lived in the highland forests since time immemorial. This have been their natural habitat even when Kenya was first incorporated as a British Colony in 1895. However, the process of territorial seizure and loss of Ogiek forest land began in 1939 and continues today. Since 1939, there have been attempts, often forcibly, by successive political regimes in Kenya to remove the Ogiek from their ancestral homelands.

Both the colonial and post colonial governments have tried to obliterate the Ogiek land security by treating them as lawless trespassers in the forest lands in question. The Ogiek people continue the struggle to avert total dispossession and possible danger of imminent extinction by pursuing their territorial security and ultimately their survival through seeking affirmative action of protection with regard to access to and use of

their forest land and other natural resources therein. In this pursuit, the Ogiek today are able to identify their homelands in both Mau and Mount Elgon forests.

Discrimination Against The Ogiek

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the post colonial government and the present government have not determined complacent land and forest policy especially towards the Ogiek people. In 1938, the carter land commission denied the Ogiek their status as a tribe independent like the rest of other communities. It is fundamental to take cognisance of the fact that the Ogiek problem has become a cup of tea to civil society organisations the world over, the government of Kenya and donor agencies, elusively working towards forest protection and the welfare of indigenous peoples.

This is attested by the stagnated progress in educational and economic advancement of the Ogiek people and the stalemate in their court cases that is to determine the freedom of the Ogiek people and pave way towards self-determination. More than 30 years of donor support and civil society intervention continues to bear little fruit because of this absent linkage that is itself a discriminatory practice by the government, civil society organisations and donor institutions that purport to crusade for indigenous rights. This conspicuous discriminatory practice cannot be overcome by the Ogiek themselves as it continues to supply fuel to this organisations to exist - under slogans such as indigenous rights, indigenous fund etc. yet they are not connected to indigenous peoples, and therefore do not see through the indigenous eye.

The extreme sloppiness and lack of political will to implement the resettlement of the Ogiek within their natural habitat has denied them the realisation of their economic and social rights. The following are some of the noticeable violations in the Ogiek case:

- The right to self-expression in matters of evictions.
- The right to settle in a healthy, safe and clean environment.
- The not to be right to natural resources.
- The right dispossessed from one's home and surrounding.
- The right to guaranteed security of tenure by way of an assured right to reside and settle.
- The right of gender equality in all dimensions of land and housing processes as outlined above.

The legal and policy framework, which is a carry over from the colonial times, has little management content being almost entirely concerned with control and distribution. This is attested by the inordinate concentration of control and decision making powers over communally generated property resources on the government and its agencies. By section 3 of the Government Lands Act, the president is given absolute powers to make grants or dispositions of any estates, interests or rights in or over non-alienated government lands. This land presently includes forest reserves, other government

reserves, townships and other urban centres, national parks and open water. Non-alienated government land is land reserved for future use by the government itself and may be available to the general public for various uses. However, the deficiency of the existing framework for sustainable management of public lands and forest is appreciated even by the government. Both public lands and forest are already under considerable pressure from increased population and competing land use systems.

Over the years policy statements have indicated a desire on part of the government to institute far reaching policy changes as concerns forests and public lands. There have however been substantial discrepancies between the statement of policy and the practice evidence in its implementation. This continue to be conducted without consultation with the key stakeholders. A case in point is the draft forestry bill 1999, that seeks to restrict any unlawful entry of persons and access of forestry products. This if finally sooner or later enacted into law will adversely restrict access of the Ogiek from their homeland thus cutting the Ogiek off from their only life support system. This should be done by holding a grassroots referendum with the Ogiek people.

Forest Exploitation and Environmental Degradation

The importance of forests to the Kenyan economy has been recognised for a long time. Apart from being source of fuel wood, raw materials for building, tools, medicine and forage for both domestic and wild animals, forests are a significant cultural resource, as a large number of cultural events are held within forest environments. Moreover, in the context of industrialisation and economic development, forests have become central to the wood-based industries, which produce timber, pulp and paper, panels and boards etc. They are also important otherwise as sources of raw materials in that they act as carbon sequestration sinks and have critical functions relative to prevention of soil erosion, protection of water catchments, wildlife habitat and conservation of biodiversity.

The emergence of various interest groups who thrive on the misery of the Ogiek people is not only a discriminatory practice, but a premeditated attack not only to destroy the culture of Ogiek, sustainable resource usage patterns but also to take up the common responsibility of the Ogiek within their own environment. It is a pity that the government of Kenya, the ministry of environment, the Narok County Council and the Kenya Wildlife Services have not offered even a single chance to an Ogiek individual to work as a forest ranger or warden. It is true that as forest dwellers, an educated Ogiek knows the forest, his homeland, better than a non-indigenous person. Instead non-native Kenyans armed with machine guns purporting to protect the forest as guards who even turn around to provide energy and supervision to illegal forest logging activities that have now resulted to water shortages and power blackouts in Kenya are considered. This also puts at risk our former slave masters (British) and the Egyptian economy who depend on River Nile.

At this point it should also come out convincingly clear that with the continuing logging activities occasioned by illicit licensing, the excision of forests (Ogiek homeland), the loss of vegetation resulting to a decrease in evapotranspiration, hence low rainfall and the permanent loss of biological diversity is not imagined but is scientifically real. Animal and plant species will go extinct all over Africa and not only the Ogiek community this time round. Great care should be taken towards conserving the dense, beautiful remaining forest cover in Kenya.

It is clear that with the silence on the forest excision issue which is currently under implementation by way of forest land sale to foreign commercial individuals and powerful interested parties within the government, putting the forest under tea growing, is a self explanatory signal of the extinction of the Ogiek. We the Ogiek are merely being used as historical apparatus. Our cultural sacred sites have not been spared this scourge. The customary resource tenure governing common property resources in traditional society has been under considerable pressure from the privatisation drive that was first introduced in the 1950's with land titling and individualisation of tenure. As an advocate, may I authoritatively assert that the Ogiek do not require land titles to prove ownership of their homeland. By the law of adverse possessions, the Ogiek have an automatic right to their homeland.

Recommendations

Collaborative Action and Legal Policy Shift

Kenya ratified not only the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights but also the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and is therefore obliged by international law to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the Ogiek people to their settlement and natural habitat as a forest dwelling community. The state must open up about the grievances of marginalised people like the Ogiek and formulate and implement environmental laws and a policy framework that takes into account the security of currently or potentially disadvantaged groups. Other than the forest department being used to threaten the Ogiek community with imminent eviction, it should instead carry out integral programmes with a range of strategies and responses to ensure their territorial security and, ultimately, their survival

There is an emerging need to extrapolate the Ogiek saga beyond the land, forestry and discriminatory regime. It is clear as this essay portrays that the Ogiek are marginalised and 70% illiterate given the prevailing disturbances. The Ogiek have no schools, hospitals or administration posts. They have been impudently abandoned by this generation of mankind who portent to run human rights clinics and justice shops. Education is one proven element that changes man's perception and prepares him to undertake responsibilities of even abstract existence. We hereby seek support from willing donors

and philanthropic organisations to come and join us in a struggle to improve educational standards of the Ogiek.

In the view of ORIP, if resource dependent communities are empowered and their indigenous knowledge, systems and institutions articulated so that they inform the policy making processes, then common property resources (forest and lands) will be managed sustainably. The empowerment of these communities must however be given legal effect by substantial changes in the legal framework governing common property resources. The challenge here is not only to empower the community with capacity and an awareness of these legal provisions (legal awareness training) but to carry out policy and legal research in this area to create new legal forms and instruments that will give effects to this new thinking both in the social and political organisation of society and in how it relates to property.

Burkina Faso and Mali

Saoudata Aboubacrine

L'atelier de Accra sur le thème, Peuples Autochtones : Terre, environnement et racisme se présente comme le lieu critique approprié pour permettre aux organisations autochtones africaines de réfléchir davantage sur les difficultés et les obstacles que vivent les communautés autochtones africaines, notamment, en ce qui concerne leur environnement, leurs espaces vitaux de vie en relation avec le racisme, l'intolérance et la xénophobie .

L'évènement qui réunit en un même lieu plusieurs organisations africaines représente une occasion sans précédent pour poser les jalons d'une réflexion la plus large possible sur les questions de racisme, de discrimination raciale, d'intolérance, corrélativement avec la terre, l'environnement.

Le racisme et l'intolérance se manifestent sous plusieurs aspects. De nos jours, les manifestations traditionnelles de racisme se perpétuent sous de nouvelles formes qui se profilent sous le couvert de la mondialisation et de l'économie globalisée!

Les touaregs à l'instar d'autres peuples autochtones, notamment africains n'échappent pas à cette menace.. Il faut cependant souligner que les populations autochtones s'organisent et mettent en place des stratégies pour contrer la marginalisation et l'exclusion.

Le morcellement de l'espace touareg

L'espace touareg, s'étendant sur près de 2.500.000 km² (équivalent à l'Europe occidentale), a été morcelé à l'indépendance des pays africains en 1960 entre cinq pays

: Algérie, Burkina Faso, Libye, Mali et Niger. Ce morcellement est ressenti par le peuple touareg comme une déchirure de l'épine dorsale d'un peuple. C'est l'une des plus profondes manifestations de racisme que les touaregs continuent de porter comme un lourd fardeau.

Approximativement estimé à 3 millions de personnes, les touaregs sont devenus, sans leur consentement, de facto les "citoyens" d'Etats pluriethniques.

Le nomadisme pastoral, l'agriculture d'oasis et le trafic caravanier sont traditionnellement les piliers de la vie économique. A l'instar d'autres peuples autochtones, les touaregs entretiennent des rapports complexes et étroits avec l'environnement. Or, les frontières issues de la colonisation interdisent, désormais, les grands cycles de transhumance; système de régulation adapté à la rareté des ressources en eau et en pâturage ainsi qu'au souci constant de réaliser l'équilibre du milieu naturel.

Les caravanes (généralement plusieurs milliers de chameaux), indispensable source de revenu ont définitivement disparu sous la conjugaison de divers facteurs (interdictions de traverser les frontières, tracasseries administratives et policières, racket etc....

Au plan culturel les touaregs font partie de l'ensemble amazigh: ils parlent le tamashagh et écrivent le tifinagh, l'une des plus anciennes écritures d'Afrique avec l'amharique éthiopien. Pendant longtemps, le seul fait d'utiliser cette écriture équivalait à un crime. Aujourd'hui encore les associations qui souhaitent promouvoir et réhabiliter cette écriture se voit refuser l'autorisation légale.

La moindre manifestation pacifique de désespoir et de raz le bol, est réprimée dans le sang. Ces dernières années (1990-1998), plus que de l'hostilité du milieu physique et des catastrophes naturelles, le peuple touareg a surtout été éprouvé par une série de violences et secousses diverses du fait de l'homme.

Quelques exemples de manifestations de racisme en relation avec les espaces vitaux des populations touarègues

Les touaregs sont essentiellement des pasteurs nomades. Les parcours traditionnels de transhumances se rétrécissent de plus en plus au profit des terres cultivables. Et, c'est de toute évidence qu'en cas de conflit entre un agriculteur et un éleveur, que l'administration donne raison à l'agriculteur. Un autre aspect est celui ci : pendant que les paysans agriculteurs reçoivent des aides pour leur exploitation, les éleveurs eux sont contraints de payer des impôts sur leur troupeau et ne bénéficient d'aucune politique de promotion de l'élevage (santé animale, eau, protection des espaces de pâture etc.

L'exploitation des ressources naturelles : la coupe de bois de feu ou à usage d'habitat dans les zones nomades est tolérée pour les non autochtones alors que les nomades sont amendées même quand ils coupent un cure dent!!!

Dans les zones minières d'uranium ou de phosphates qui se trouvent en zone touarègue, les autochtones ne peuvent prétendre à aucun emploi sauf de niveau de gardien et les retombées de ces ressources profitent aux non autochtones.

Les zones touarègues, contrairement aux idées reçues sont riches en faune composée d'espèces animales sauvages rares: la chasse y est interdite aux autochtones alors que les fonctionnaires et les militaires se livrent à de véritables massacres de bêtes avec souvent des armes de guerre et des véhicules tout terrain.

Les autorités des pays concernés organisent exclusivement dans ces zones des circuits de chasse à l'intention des riches princes du Golfe arabique. Evidemment, les retombées de ces safaris ne restent jamais dans la zone.

Les vestiges et le patrimoine culturel de ces zones sont régulièrement pillés par les autorités et les tours operator. L'administration par le système de création de réserve naturelle interdit l'accès des autochtones à des parcours traditionnels alors que dans les zones non autochtones ces mesures d'interdictions sont aménagées de manière à permettre aux populations locales de continuer à exploiter leurs espaces naturels,

Bien entendu, nous n'avons pas la prétention d'épuiser tous les exemples de manifestations de racisme et de xénophobie. Cependant, il convient de souligner un dernier exemple en raison de son aspect spirituel: tout le monde connaît la médiatisation faite autour de la fameuse épreuve commercia sportive qu'est le Paris Dakar. Tout est mis en oeuvre pour faire croire aux africains, notamment, des zones saharo sahéliennes, que cette caravane de fer est bénéfique aux populations des pays qu'elle traverse! A l'occasion de l'une des plus récentes éditions, le tracé de la course a traversé en deux points des cimetières touarègues centenaires en dépit de l'opposition des anciens de la région de Tombouctou. Les autorités n'ont rien fait pour convaincre les organisateurs de modifier le parcours en déviant rien que d'une distance de deux kilomètres le parcours initial.

Propositions d'actions

Pour des raisons morales et d'éthiques et surtout pour des raisons objectives, on ne peut plus continuer à servir généreusement le discours sur la démocratie, la justice, la tolérance, les droits humains, le développement et l'environnement alors que la réalité africaine, même lorsque tout est mis en oeuvre pour la voiler, fait apparaître une opposition entre les groupes dominants et les groupes dominés, les indigènes et les non indigènes, les autochtones et les non autochtones, voire les sauvages et les "civilisés".

En Afrique, la réalité est que la problématique autochtone est ignorée, voire occultée, en particulier dans sa sphère francophone, dont les stratégies de gestion politique et territoriale, sont essentiellement héritières de la tradition jacobine française.

Parmi plusieurs attitudes excluantes on peut retenir: celles des Etats qui administrent ces peuples qui sont peu favorables à la reconnaissance et à l'affirmation de spécificités autochtones, ensuite, celles des peuples indigènes eux-mêmes qui sont fragmentés et dispersés, des groupes dominants qui méprisent et instrumentalisent les communautés indigènes, enfin, la notion de peuple indigène reste encore péjorative en Afrique francophone de l'ouest,

Comme tous les autres peuples, les autochtones attachent une importance particulière à l'affirmation de leur capacités à s'auto développer, façonner leur propre développement social, économique et culturel et de modeler leur identité culturelle, préserver leur environnement naturel et spirituel. Cela signifie qu'ils ont le droit de participer pleinement et librement au processus de développement, tenant compte des contextes nationaux différents où ces peuples vivent. Leurs savoirs, leurs connaissances, leur imagination et leur ingéniosité représentent des atouts considérables pour eux mêmes, pour leurs communautés et pour leurs pays.

Si bon nombre de Peuples autochtones dans le monde se trouve actuellement en proie à des difficultés énormes visant leur environnement, leur culture et leur vie, il existe des peuples, qui par leur situation ou par leur manque de possibilité de résistance sont menacés de disparaître en tant que Peuple au cours des prochaines décennies. Il s'agit des peuples autochtones d'Afrique, singulièrement, ceux d'Afrique francophone.

La marginalisation, l'exclusion, le centralisme politique sur le terrain de la construction de l'unité nationale dans une atmosphère sociale, politique et culturelle fortement chargée de racisme, de discrimination raciale, de xénophobie, d'intolérance et de violence; ont fragilisé à l'extrême ces peuples qui tiennent avant tout à conserver leur identité et à préserver l'environnement.

C'est bien là un ensemble de facteurs contradictoires qu'il convient au plus vite de surmonter car les cultures autochtones forment un patrimoine diversifié de savoirs et de pensées, qui constituent une ressource potentielle pour l'Afrique et l'ensemble de la planète.

Si nous ne voulons pas encore une fois manqué le rendez vous avec l'Histoire, il devient impératif d'agir pour rendre crédible le principe de la diversité et du droit à la différence,.

Concrètement et dans cet esprit, Tinhinane inscrit son action dans la perspective de mettre en réseau les organisations autochtones de la zone ouest africaine et de créer

un cadre de concertation, de réflexion et d'action, de dégager des solutions et des opportunités.

La finalité de notre stratégie est de contribuer à l'amélioration de façon significative de la situation des peuples autochtones africains. L'intention est de relever le défi majeur que représente la communication et la diffusion à une large échelle des droits des peuples autochtones en Afrique de l'ouest en les articulant à une utilisation des mécanismes nationaux et internationaux de protection et de promotion des droits humains.

Nous agissons à travers l'information, la formation et une sensibilisation ciblée de l'opinion africaine et internationale sur la situation actuelle des peuples autochtones ouest africains, notamment sur les souffrances qu'ils endurent du fait du racisme et de la discrimination raciale.

Notre action est conçue également comme une contribution à la dynamique en cours de protection et de promotion des droits humains en général et spécifiquement des droits fondamentaux des peuples autochtones,

A terme, il s'agit de donner un sens à ce qui pour l'instant n'est qu'un slogan; à savoir la participation effective de tous: autochtones et non autochtones à l'exercice du pouvoir économique, social, culturel et politique pour valoriser tous les potentiels de dynamisme de l'Afrique,

Ce serait aussi rendre possible une meilleure connaissance de la problématique autochtone en Afrique francophone par les décideurs politiques, les non autochtones et les autres acteurs de développement.

C'est également, la possibilité pour les associations autochtones d'acquérir une capacité accrue d'influencer les décisions concernant la vie économique, sociale et politique de leur milieu, et représenter leur peuple au niveau national et international. Si un tel effort est consenti, la problématique autochtone sera davantage prise en compte dans les politiques nationales et régionales de développement.

Mais, il s'agit aussi et surtout de la responsabilité des associations des peuples autochtones qui sont contraintes de s'organiser et de travailler en synergie pour contrer la manipulation et l'instrumentalisation par ceux qui apportent des subsides, essentiellement du Nord.

Cette concertation nécessairement synergique devra emprunter deux pistes complémentaires. Celle d'une présence régulière sur l'arène associative ouest africaine, africaine et internationale et d'une participation active aux rencontres traitant de la problématique des droits humains et des droits des peuples autochtones. Celle d'une mise en place d'un réseau ouest africain des organisations autochtones opérant sur la base d'objectifs stratégiques concertés et d'un plan d'action opérationnel.

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*"Moreover the profit of the earth is for all
the king himself is served by the fields."*

Eccelesiastes.... 5:9



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