



# Economic and Social Council

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Agenda item 5

### High-level segment

## **Statement submitted by Vaagdhara, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

The term ‘Adivasis’ meaning the first settlers, popularly known as ‘tribal’s’ today, had a very long and rich cultural past. Due to marketization, the ‘tribal’s’ are gradually losing their culture, practices and lifestyle. During the 1990s, when the exposure to the outside world influenced the tribal lifestyle and culture, then people started to look outside for the solutions to their issues and these solutions forced them to leave their culture and practices behind. But, this was not the end of the problem. In fact the situation worsens, and considering the persisting situation it is necessary to revive the tribal practices, culture and lifestyle. VAAGDHARA believes that the solutions to any issue pertaining to the community cannot be found outside but exists within the community itself. Therefore, VAAGDHARA started dialogue with the community in informal settings through community-based institutions on the issues related to their life. This dialogue was further strengthened and shared on a massive scale, and further came up in the form of the Tribal Farmer’s Sovereignty Dialogue March followed by the Tribal Conclave.

To make community realize its strength and to find solutions to existing problems, every year VAAGDHARA organizes the Tribal Farmer’s Sovereignty Dialogue March followed by the Tribal Conclave. The key strategy followed is of 3Ps i.e. Promote – Provide – Protect. During the 21 days Sovereignty Dialogue March, 200 meetings are conducted, and 14,085 tribal farmers are reached in 190 villages. This transact walk is truly a sensitizing journey in knowing the real, pinpointed issues which are area specific and triggering the need of exploring the tribal solutions. Following to this, the Conclave is organized where around 5,000 people participate. Discussions are held around the broad thematic areas of True Farming, True Childhood and True Democracy. The findings from the March are further validated during the conclave and the tribal community takes the Oath for Protection and Promotion of tribal culture and customs. This serves as an excellent platform where both the providers and the tribal’s who are being provided come together for dialogue sharing, a place where opinions are raised, demands are made and responsibilities are fixed to protect water, forest and land and to achieve SDG 4, 10, 13 and 16. Following are the key recommendations given by the community in the form of a Charter of Demand, namely:

- Government programs and schemes should focus on strengthening and reviving the indigenous knowledge and practices of the community.
- While developing policies, schemes, programs and projects for tribals, Government should take care that they should not negatively affect tribal culture and traditions.
- Providing true-childhood for every child, by creating opportunities for growth and development through education, eradicating child labor, and checking migration.
- Revival of ‘Gram Chopal’ for regular discussions, planning and action on development.