



**Economic and Social  
Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

E/CN.4/Sub.2/2004/NGO/17  
13 July 2004

ENGLISH ONLY

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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Sub-Commission on the Promotion  
and Protection of Human Rights  
Fifty-sixth session  
Item 5 (b) of the provisional agenda

**PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION OF INDIGENOUS  
PEOPLES**

**Written statement\* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental  
organization in special consultative status**

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

[1<sup>st</sup> July 2004]

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\*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the  
submitting non-governmental organization(s).

**Alarming situation of indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation, Australia and Vietnam**

Society for Threatened is alarmed about the situation of indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation, Australia and Vietnam. The Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of Russia are far from self-sufficiency and self-determination. Though the **Russian Federation** has frequently committed itself to the human rights of its indigenous citizens and even legislated for the creation of so called "Territories for traditional natural resources utilisation", i.e. Traditional Subsistence Territories TST, in May 2001 claims put forward by the Itelmen of Kamchatka and other Indigenous Peoples are again and again rejected, because the Ministry for Economic Development and Trade until today did not fulfil its obligation to pass the implementation regulations. The approximately 1019 Itelmen are one of the very small peoples depending distinctively on their land. Their principal traditional occupation is fishing. Their creation myth, their culture and their main feast of "Alkhalalalai" all centre on the salmon that they catch in the rivers and coastal waters of Kamchatka. Commercial exploitation and inadequate quota levels have made it difficult for them to catch enough fish to survive. Without guaranteed rights to their land through the creation of a TST they will not be able to manage a self-sufficient survival as fishermen. Society for Threatened Peoples therefore appeals to the Sub-Commission to urge the Russian Federation to put into effect the "Law on Traditional Subsistence territories of Indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the far east of Russia" without any further delay.

Society for Threatened Peoples is concerned about the ongoing discrimination of the **Aboriginal Australians**. Though already criticized by the United Nations, policies like Native Title Amendment Act, which is constricting the Aboriginal People's right to negotiate, the Mandatory Sentencing laws, which make imprisonment obligatory as punishment even for petty crimes or the alarmingly high number of deaths in custody among Aboriginal Peoples remain deplorable facts. After 14 years of existence the Australian Government now introduced legislation to abolish the "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Council" ATSIC, the Indigenous Peoples' organisation for self government and to transfer its authorities to government agencies. Even though we do not deny that ATSIC might indeed be suitable for reforms Society for Threatened Peoples is calling upon the Sub-Commission to urge the Government of Australia to take all steps necessary with the informed consent, participation and consultation of the Aboriginal Australians.

Indigenous Peoples in **Vietnam's** troubled Central Highlands province of Daklak protested in April 2004 against their denial of religious freedom and land rights. Major unrest in the highlands in February 2001 over religious and property rights was crushed by Vietnamese security forces and the region has since been under a blanket of security. Testimonies from victims of the brutal repression by Vietnamese security forces during the Easter week 2004 indicate that many demonstrators have been beaten and wounded, dozens have been killed. At least 120 indigenous inhabitants of the Daklak province have been arrested before, during and after the mass protest. The free access to the troubled province has been blocked after the demonstrations. Even today it is extremely difficult to get an independent overview of the demonstrations and the following brutal repression. Indigenous inhabitants have been prevented by Vietnamese officials to provide testimony of the crackdown to delegations of foreign diplomats and journalists, participating in highly controlled visits of the province. Therefore

Society for Threatened Peoples calls upon the Sub-Commission to urge Vietnam to invite the U.N. Special Rapporteur on religious Intolerance, the Special Rapporteur on Torture, the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions and the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to visit Vietnam and to grant the indigenous peoples free access to all districts of the Central Highlands to independently investigate in the human rights situation. Furthermore the Vietnamese authorities should inform about the whereabouts of all people arrested in connection with the demonstrations in Easter week and should guarantee fair and public trials for all indigenous inhabitants arrested since March 2004.

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