Violation of the rights of indigenous peoples in the world, including land grabbing

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Francisco ASSIS (S&D, PT) on violation of the rights of indigenous peoples in the world, including land grabbing.

The total population of indigenous peoples is estimated to be over **370 million people living in over 70 countries worldwide**, representing around 5 % of the total world population. There are at least 5 000 distinct indigenous peoples, who, despite their geographical dispersion, face similar threats and challenges.

These people are victims of violence as well as racism, discrimination, forced evictions, destructive settlement, and illegal expropriation of their ancestral lands or lack of access to their resources, livelihoods and traditional knowledge.

Members called upon the Union and Member States to:

- adopt all necessary measures for the **full recognition, protection and promotion** of the rights of indigenous peoples, including to their lands, territories and resources;
- make sure that all its development, investment and trade policies **respect the human rights of indigenous peoples** as enshrined in human rights treaties and conventions;
- follow all the necessary steps to effectively comply with the provisions contained in **International Labour Organisation** Convention No 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and recalls that all ratifying states are obliged to develop coordinated and systematic action to protect.

Rights of indigenous peoples: the EU was called upon to legally recognise the territorial autonomy and **self-determination** of indigenous people, which implies their right to own, use, develop and control their lands, territories, waters and costal seas, and other resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership.

The report stresses the importance of:

- ensuring universal access for indigenous peoples to their national population registers;
- conducting mandatory human rights **impact assessments** of any new activity in the mining and oil and gas extraction sectors prior to the commencement of these activities;
- **including** indigenous peoples and rural communities in the decision-making process with regard to strategies for tackling climate change, and consulting them in all deliberations on issues that could affect them;
- ensuring physical integrity and legal assistance for indigenous, environmental, intellectual property and land rights defenders, and fully respect the rights of indigenous peoples and rural communities.

The report called for the **withdrawal of private security and military forces** deployed in the territories of indigenous peoples in violation of their rights.

Land grabbing: Members remained concerned about the situation of land grabbing as a result of corrupt practices by corporations, foreign investors, national and international state actors, officials and authorities. They called on the EU to:

- place greater emphasis on the issue of land grabbing;

- request **disclosure of land acquisitions** involving EU-based corporations and actors or EU-funded development projects in order to increase the transparency and accountability of those acquisitions;
- adopt the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests and support their implementation.

Business and human rights: Members called for the EU to engage in constructive negotiations on a **UN treaty** on transnational corporations that guarantees respect for the human rights of indigenous peoples, and of women and girls in particular. They recommended that the EU develop a **European regional action plan for business and human rights**, guided by the principles enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The EU must work to hold multinational corporations and international financial institutions to account for their impact on indigenous communities' human and environmental rights.

Sustainable and economic development: Members called on the EU to include indigenous peoples, and especially indigenous women and rural communities, in their strategies for tackling climate change and in the design of efficient climate strategies relating to adaptation and mitigation. They requested that the issue of climate-induced displacement be taken seriously and stated that they were open to a debate on establishing a provision concerning **climate migration**.

Members recalled that 80 % of forests worldwide constitute traditional lands and territories of indigenous peoples and stressed the vital role of indigenous peoples for sustainable management of natural resources and conservation of biodiversity. In addition they noted that between 200 and 500 million people worldwide practise pastoralism.

The committee stressed the need to foster **sustainable pastoralism** and, more broadly, to recognise pastoralists' and indigenous peoples' rights related to communal ownership of ancestral land, their right to freely dispose of their natural resources and their rights to culture and religion.

Lastly, the report recommended that greater prominence be given to the situation of indigenous people in the **EU's foreign policy**, that a mechanism be established to carry out independent impact assessment studies prior to the conclusion of trade and cooperation agreements in order to prevent their deleterious effects on the rights of indigenous and that the EU strengthen support for indigenous peoples as part of its development cooperation programmes.