

# **United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)**

## **23<sup>rd</sup> Session**

**United Nations Headquarters New York City April 15<sup>th</sup> – April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**Item 5(g):** Discussion on the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum (economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health and human rights), with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

My name is Nana Osei Bonsu. I stand before you, a voice echoing from generations past, seeking your collaborative support. I am an Indigenous youth leader representing the indigenous people of Benimasi-Boadi near Kumasi, Ghana. In 2023, I fled my homeland, not as a criminal, but as a man seeking refuge under the United Nations Convention Against Torture. My crime? Defending the land entrusted to me by my ancestors, the very land that cradles the final resting place of our revered maternal ancestor. This is the story of not just my struggle, but the struggle faced by countless Indigenous People around the world.

In Ghana, local government, particularly the Kumasi Traditional Council, fosters impunity. This culture fuels land grabs, judicial interference, and persecution of unprotected Indigenous People. It weakens rule of law (SDG 16) and denies justice, hindering progress towards peace and strong institutions. Despite reports, lack of political will allows these allegations to persist, impeding regional development.

The inception of Land Rights Defenders was not merely an act of founding an organization; it was the birth of a movement aimed at challenging the status quo and advocating for the disenfranchised. Growing up in Ghana, i was no stranger to the struggles faced by countless Indigenous communities. The sight of families being uprooted from their ancestral homes, the destruction of livelihoods, and the silencing of voices crying out for justice fueled a fire within me—a fire that would eventually light the way for countless others.

One unique aspect of Land Rights Defenders is our innovative approach to activism – the fusion of art and advocacy. We believe art has the power to transcend language barriers and evoke empathy.

Through our groundbreaking “**Art Meet Activism**” campaign, we are painting a new narrative, one where art breaks the chains of silence and ignites a global movement.

Indigenous artists, the rightful storytellers of their lands, are taking center stage. Their murals become defiant cries for justice, their sculptures, testaments to a stolen heritage. We are empowering them to reclaim their narratives, to paint their struggles and their dreams onto the very canvas of their existence.

This is more than art; it's a revolution. It's a call to action that transcends languages and borders. It's a beacon of hope for those who have been unheard for far too long.

We urge you, the esteemed members of the UNPFII, to join us! Stand with Land Rights Defenders and the Art Meet Activism campaign. Let the voices of the voiceless be heard, not just today, but for generations to come.

The world watches, the future depends on our collective action!