

# Information note #10

## How to make an oral intervention before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights



Young Baka women near Moundoulou, Payo, Cameroon, February 2010.  
Photo: Centre for Environment and Development (CED).

### How to prepare an oral intervention for the African Commission

There are various ways of preparing an oral intervention. The most suitable format for the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African Commission or the Commission) is one which is informative and factual, with a central theme and one or more specific examples. Commissioners prefer interventions to be reasonably objective, using professional language rather than language which is emotionally or politically charged. The best interventions are those expressed in measured language and which refer to the specific agenda item in question.

An intervention should make reference to the relevant provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African Charter) and/or the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Women's Protocol or the Protocol) and, if possible, to any other national or international legislation. An intervention should include a conclusion in which recommendations are presented to the African Commission, the government and/or the international community.

The following points should be of use in preparing an intervention:

1. The intervention must be written in one of the official languages of the African Commission, (which include English and French);
2. The intervention should last no more than three minutes. It is recommended to practise reading it aloud before delivering it at the Commission;
3. The intervention should be written in clear, logical language and not in language which is emotionally charged or highly politicised;
4. State the name of the speaker, the name of the NGO and the country of origin;

5. State the subject or issue which is being addressed in the intervention;
6. Describe the human rights situation addressed in the intervention and indicate which articles of the African Charter relate to the subject or issue;
7. State which other human rights legislation or documents relate to the subject or issue (if applicable), for example, United Nations human rights treaties;
8. State if there are any national human rights or "good practices" relevant to the topic or issue;
9. Clearly state the recommendations, suggestions or demands made to the following bodies:
  - a. the African Commission
  - b. the government
  - c. the international community.

### How to present an oral intervention to the African Commission

1. In the room where the public session is held, write the name of the NGO on the list of speakers (each agenda item has a separate list which is kept by a member of the Secretariat who sits in the front row). An NGO must have observer status in order to have the right to be added to the list and to speak;
2. Give three copies of the intervention to the member of the Secretariat. These are for the translators and the Secretariat (so that it can be included in the meeting report). It may be appropriate to send a copy of the intervention to the government representative prior to the presentation;
3. The Chairperson calls out the names of the speakers in the or-

der on the list. It is important to remain in the room at all times as the order of items on the agenda is frequently changed without notice to the participants;

4. When the Chairperson calls a name, the person must raise his/her hand and find a seat with a microphone. If (s)he is not in the room when his/her name is called, the meeting will go ahead in his/her absence which means that (s)he will lose the opportunity to speak on that agenda item. If the speaker has to leave the room, (s)he should nominate someone else to take his/her place;
5. Read the intervention slowly and clearly, respecting the allotted three minute time slot. Try to avoid the temptation to speak quickly in an attempt to say more: remember how difficult it is to concentrate during long meetings. Many people will not be able to concentrate on the intervention if it is too fast, not to mention the fact that the translators will be unable to follow a presentation if it is rushed;
6. After the intervention, it is possible that other participants will request a copy of the intervention. It is useful to have at least 20 copies to hand out;
7. After the intervention, the Chairperson will thank the speaker and may make some remarks before moving on to the next speaker. The government representative may comment on the intervention. The Chairperson will grant permission to speak even if the government representative's name is not on the list of speakers. Other Commissioners may also comment on the intervention if they wish. Note that only State representatives have a right to respond.

#### **Example of an intervention**

The following is the text of an intervention presented by the Centre for the Environment and Development (CED, *Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement*) during the 47th Ordinary Session of the African Commission, held at Banjul, The Gambia, May 2010.

*Madam Chairperson, honourable Commissioners,*

*Through this statement, the Centre for the Environment and Development wishes to share with you the problems facing indigenous women of the Cameroonian forests.*

*Madam Chairperson, logging activity and the spread of industrial plantations have caused numerous problems among indigenous communities. These take the form of malnutrition, the disappearance of medicinal plants and the loss of traditional knowledge among indigenous women of the forests. Furthermore, indigenous communities do not receive adequate benefit from the revenues generated by logging activities. To date, none of the communities living on the lands on which industrial plantations have been established has been either consulted or compensated.*

*Today, indigenous women of the forests experience difficulties in childbirth and are prey to diseases previously unknown to them, for example malaria, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections. This state of affairs is exacerbated by the ongoing destruction of the forests and lack of proximity to health centres.*

*Access to employment remains a major concern for indigenous women as the Cameroonian State has not taken any measures to integrate them into professional life and society. They find themselves obliged to undertake mainly manual work as they do not have the benefit of training and they are not recruited to public sector roles.*

*Madam Chairperson, honourable Commissioners, the Centre for the Environment and Development would like the Commission to make the following recommendations to the State of Cameroon:*

- 1. Ensure greater attention is paid to the rights of indigenous peoples in areas affected by logging and in areas of industrial plantations*
- 2. Regulate logging of those species of trees which have cultural and medicinal value for the indigenous peoples of the forests.*
- 3. Provide access to training and dignified employment for indigenous women.*

*Thank you.*

#### **Notes**

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