



## **AMERINDIAN PEOPLES ASSOCIATION**

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### **APA's intervention at the 23rd Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII).**

**April 15- 22, 2024| United Nations Headquarters, New York City, USA.**

#### **Speaker:**

**Mr Kemal Robinson, Indigenous Youth Activist & APA's Youth Representative.**

My name is Kemal Robinson, a proud Patamuna and I am the Youth Representative of the Amerindian Peoples Association in Guyana.

Indigenous youth of today live in a time where the certainty of our future is at risk despite promises of policy changes, financing and respecting our right to self-determination.

Our lives, our lands, and our knowledge systems are inseparable. Therefore, it is vital that we as youth are involved in all these aspects for the assurance of our futures. In Guyana, this is realised through our indigenous governance systems. However, these systems are undermined by the State when they delegitimise indigenous-led governance bodies, and do not respect communities right to free, prior, and informed consent.

The indigenous youth of my country want to contribute to the development and betterment of our peoples and communities. This means considering our needs for education and our involvement in our land management.

This separation from our land affects our ability to protect and sustain our territories, resources, and environment. In my country Guyana, indigenous systems of knowledge have been disregarded by the State and discourages youth from participating in decisions about their land. Specifically, we have government Ministers venturing into Indigenous Communities and telling us that, we as indigenous youths, are unqualified to map and monitor our territories – the same land that we have been living on and protecting since time immemorial. Indigenous youth must learn from and work with our elders and community leaders to continue the legacy of our ancestors. This cannot be separated from us because it can only lead to truly addressing the climate crisis - which we, as indigenous people, had no role in creating. Therefore, I call on this Permanent Forum to encourage member states to recognise and respect Indigenous Youth's knowledge of their territories and create spaces for them to be actively involved in the monitoring and protect of our territories.



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You say youths are the future leaders of tomorrow, but we are in the present and need to take action and make decisions for our futures now. Therefore, we recommend to the Permanent Forum that:

- Collective land titles to be issued to Indigenous Communities since this is integral for land management and to foster youth involvement in the mapping and monitoring of our lands.
- The delivery of education in Indigenous Communities should be culturally relevant and Indigenous led. Indigenous children should not have to leave their homes and live in unsafe dormitories just to access higher education.
- Our decision-making processes and forums should be free of political interference, and this refers to elections of our village leaders; decision-making at the national level and even spaces like this Permanent Forum should be free of political interference. A non-partisan apolitical space fosters greater participation of youths, their self-determination, and allows for decisions that are truly made in the interest of Indigenous Peoples futures rather than pleasing political masters.

Tengi kulu- thank you!