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Article 6

# Oral Statement by Society for Threatened People

*a non-governmental organization in special consultative status*

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Statement on Item 6 – UPR Plenary of Rwanda

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Mr. Chairman, the Society for Threatened People appreciates the efforts of the Rwandan government in assembling at the UPR Standing Committee.

STP is concerned by Rwanda's non-ratification of ILO Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Communities, linked to the non-recognition of the existence of minorities and indigenous peoples, in particular the Batwa.

Adoption of this convention would not necessarily direct the government's attention to any special or extraordinary treatment of the Batwa by virtue of their being indigenous, but would instead encourage the Rwandan government to take seriously the claims perceived as normal to non-indigenous citizens (Article 2.2a).

The refusal of the State to recognize the Batwa as a minority or indigenous leaves the Batwa community with no legal status or recognition and, being numerically small, they are prevented from actively engaging in political activities at the national level.

STP is concerned that the State ignores or underestimates the severity of marginalisation and discrimination faced by the Batwa. This is exacerbated by the government's refusal to refer to them by name or as indigenous to the region. This has led to gross sidelining of Batwa communities in preparation, planning and implementation of government programmes intended to provide social welfare and development services, and as such often do not benefit from national primary healthcare, clean water and shelter initiatives.

Specifically with regards to shelter, the speed with which the current "Bye-Bye Nyakatsi" has been conducted has left many hundreds of families homeless in the interim. Due to their precarious economic situation, the Batwa are disproportionately affected by this campaign. Further measures need to be taken to significantly improve access of members of the Batwa community to education, employment and occupation in order for the government not to be complicit in furthering national inequality.

STP calls on the State to reconsider its decision not to support the recommendation laid out in Report of the Working Group on the UPR calling to intensify measures to improve access by minority groups and indigenous people to basic social services, such as health, education, employment, and occupation (laid out under 81.3-Malaysia).

STP would like to thank the State for their active engagement and participation. Thank you Mr. Chairman

