



Oral Statement
Minority Rights Group
International
HRC 25th session
Adoption of UPR report Belize
2nd cycle
March 2014

Speaker: Mr. Glenn Payot

Thank you Mr. President,

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) and Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM) welcome Belize's engagement in the UPR process, including the holding of a meeting with civil society in Belmopan in December 2013 to discuss the different recommendations. We welcome the statement made by Belize to the UPR Working Group that, in respect of the July 2013 decision of the Court of Appeal affirming the rights of the Maya over their traditional lands in southern Belize, the government is seeking in conjunction with the representatives of the Maya "to determine a mutually agreeable framework for the implementation of [that] judgment". We look forward to the government engaging with us on this issue and, given the statement, presume that Belize will withdraw its appeal if to the Caribbean Court of Justice challenging the finding of Belize's highest court that the Maya are indigenous to southern Belize.

MRG and SATIIM welcome Belize's support of the recommendation to monitor continuously the extractive activities of oil companies in Mayan territory, which must also respect human rights. However, we are extremely concerned that Belize, as stated in the December 2013 meeting, considers that this recommendation is met merely by oil companies having an environmental compliance plan in place. If the activities of oil companies on Mayan territory are to respect human rights standards then such activities require from the outset the free, prior and informed consent of the local Mayan communities as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of which Belize is a signatory. We understand therefore that in accepting this recommendation, Belize recognises that extractive activities cannot take place on Maya territory (duly demarcated and titled by the government) without the free, prior and informed consent of the Maya population. To this end, we urge Belize to review the concession previously granted to US Capital Energy.

MRG and SATIIM regret that Belize is not prepared to accept the three interrelated recommendations regarding adoption of ILO convention no. 169 and the obtaining of the free, prior and informed consent of the Mayan communities. Such rejection would appear at odds with Belize's acceptance of the earlier mentioned recommendation. We would urge Belize to reconsider its position and to engage with representatives of the Mayan communities in this regard.

I thank you.