

OceaniaHR

A Grassroots NGO Movement

For the Promotion & Protection of
Global Human Rights in the Pacific

OceaniaHR is pleased to participate in the UN Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. It is in this historic session that the human rights situation in Oceania – the liquid continent – is being part of the global dialogue in this first round. We believe this 11th session is genuinely a Pacific round of the Universal Periodic Review.

We are pleased to participate and look forward to further creative collaboration to ensure the effective promotion and protection of human rights in the Pacific. We believe this session will be a very important step toward social justice in Oceania.

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Papua New Guinea: A Resource Rich State Surviving the Resource Curse to Secure Human Rights for Its Citizens in a Post-Colonial State

1.

Issue: The government of Papua New Guinea has showed a commitment to human rights. PNG has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. It is quite an impressive record although very little has happened regarding the important step of implementation beginning with reporting and then initiating the recommendations into the daily reality of people.

It is also important for PNG to ratify the remaining international instruments.

Question: Will PNG work with regional NGOs to support trainings that can assist to better participate in the human rights treaty bodies? Will PNG also partner with institutions of higher education in PNG as well as the University of South Pacific as well as the University of Hawaii at Manoa?

Recommendation: PNG immediately call and coordinate with NGOs and universities in the region for a national meeting that will provide the skills and strategies to assist the government to catch up with its responsibilities under international human rights law. PNG also meet with experts in the region to assist with acknowledging the future responsibilities of the state to its citizens as it ratifies the remaining international instruments.

2.

Issue: PNG is one of the most diverse nations in the world. It is a strength of the indigenous societies comprising PNG. Human Rights education is an important means to ensure continued cultural respect. It is important for PNG to organize and coordinate a creative curriculum that moves beyond the textbooks to culturally based popular education. It is also to use plays and other techniques that transcend the over 700 languages. It is also important to teach about conflict resolution to prevent future conflicts in the communities of PNG.

Question: Will PNG develop a national plan of action for human rights education?

Recommendation: PNG work with regional and international NGOs to conduct trainings in human rights education. PNG also translate the various international instruments it has ratified into the indigenous languages of its citizens.

3.

Issue: PNG plays a prominent role in the Melanesian spearhead group. PNG can be a catalyst for a regional human rights mechanism. PNG should sponsor a regional conference focusing on the positive contribution of a regional mechanism that could create tools that ensure human rights is respected and it is a gauge to guarantee government take actions that could prevent future conflicts of bloodshed.

Question: Will PNG host a conference to assist the Working Group for a Pacific Island Human Rights Charter and Commission? Will PNG be a leader to be one of the first states?

Recommendation: PNG be one of the founding states of a Pacific Island Human Rights Charter and Commission.

4.

Issue: The environment is essential to the future of PNG. The spiritual relationship to the land must be reaffirmed by the state through laws and programs that guarantee the right to the land for each community. PNG should focus on the new programs such as REDD and international instruments such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Question: Will PNG explain its national actions to promote and protect the unique relationship to the land? Will PNG also focus on new ideas and instruments being proposed to hold corporations accountable for pollution and destruction of the environment?

Recommendation: PNG should work closely with its citizens to rededicate itself to environmental protection. PNG should also lead in international negotiations regarding climate change. PNG should also invite the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Business Ruggie to visit PNG?

5.

Issue: There has been a tremendous amount of blood spilled in conflicts in PNG. The main conflict in Bougainville still requires attention and must be addressed to guarantee the human rights of the people of Bougainville

Question: What methods of reconciliation are being taken to ensure basic human rights? What indigenous and international models could be coordinated to ensure a peaceful future in Bougainville?

Recommendation: PNG should recommit itself to peace and justice in Bougainville. PNG should ensure there is a strong mechanism that promotes conflict resolution.