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The Amerindian Peoples Association welcomes the opportunity to input into the Special Rapporteur's report to the UN General Assembly on the Situation of Indigenous Peoples Living in Urban Areas.

What are the key factors driving the urbanization of indigenous peoples? How has this impacted the social, economic and cultural cohesion of indigenous communities throughout the world?

Indigenous peoples in Guyana are tending to move into urban areas for the following reasons:

- Educational opportunities, including skills-training and higher tertiary education;
- Paid employment opportunities; and
- Easier access to social services.

Unfortunately, this urbanization usually leads to many Indigenous Peoples being exploited in urban regions, as will be elaborated upon in the answers to the questions below.

Please provide examples of indigenous peoples occupying traditional territories that have developed into metropolitan areas over time and the impact of urbanization on their collective rights.

The government of Guyana in the past few years declared several 'townships' in the hinterland regions of Guyana without effective consultation with the indigenous peoples who own, occupy and use these lands. The establishment of these townships has infringed upon the collective land rights of Indigenous Peoples. These declared townships also overlap indigenous village titled lands that have been legally recognized (granted) by the state, e.g., the township of Mahdia overlaps the titled lands of Campbelltown, and have caused several conflicts over land use, occupation, and governance on these lands. This deliberate urbanization effort by the government has resulted in Indigenous Peoples now finding themselves having to meet payments for services they are not financially nor culturally prepared for as they are now required to pay for water and electricity. This is a form of assimilation.

What are the effects of racism and racial discrimination on urban indigenous peoples? Consider access to essential services, employment, healthcare, education, child welfare, domestic violence services and law enforcement.

Generally in Guyana, including in the city, it is a challenge to access effective and efficient services. It becomes even more challenging for many Indigenous Peoples living in urban areas as they are unable to

pay for private services. Many Indigenous Peoples find themselves being employed in the lowest paid areas of employment with the longest working hours, such as in clothing and other dry goods stores and restaurants or low-paying domestic servitude. For those Indigenous Peoples who moved to the city to pursue educational opportunities, they often have to study and work at the same time, due to lack of funding for education. The low wages and salary scale they are able to earn do not adequately provide a life with dignity. Any public service or government scholarship is very competitive to access and if granted, it is very minimal and does not cover substantial related costs.

Land and home ownership by Indigenous Peoples in urban areas is almost an illusion due to low paying jobs and the bureaucratic process required to obtain property. Indigenous women, who are single-parent find it especially difficult to become independent homeowners in urban areas. Homeowners (landlords) are selective in renting out their houses to Indigenous Peoples; sometimes they refuse to rent their homes for the sole reason that they are Indigenous Peoples.

Many Indigenous Peoples additionally find that language barriers make it challenging to access social services. The English language is not the first language of Indigenous Peoples, hence many individuals find it difficult to effectively represent themselves to access proper health care, other social services, and legal or judicial services. There is no provision of translator services in courts for Indigenous Peoples and the language barrier additionally makes it difficult to have effective legal counsel. The global COVID-19 pandemic has once again illustrated the inequality and inequitable access to all services including education, health care and political representation and inclusion.

In what ways have indigenous peoples' collective culture and identity changed by adapting to living in urban areas? How can indigenous peoples maintain their traditional knowledge, language and connection to their ancestral lands when living in urban environments?

The way of life in urban areas is one determined by individualist approaches. Legislations and regulations also does not provide for collective identity and representation. It is therefore extremely challenging to practice collective cultures in urban areas and maintain traditional knowledge and connection to ancestral lands when living in urban environments, since the main way to do this is returning to our villages and lands. Such trips to the hinterland of Guyana are extremely costly. Parents have to take time to teach their children to pass on traditional knowledge, history, language, and culture orally and with the use of other publications they can find to support this. There is very limited information in educational curricula in schools that teaches children about indigenous culture and traditional knowledge and to have respect for it. There are no formal institutions dedicated to teaching such knowledge in urban environments.

Some groups are at even greater risk of human rights violations due to intersectional forms of discrimination, including but not limited to women and girls, persons with disabilities, LGBTI persons and children. Please explain the specific situations and views of these groups and the requirements needed to ensure that their rights are recognized and protected.

The general discrimination against Indigenous Peoples and against LGBTI persons is compounded for persons who are both though various civil society organisations have been advocating for rights in these areas.

Please provide examples of resilience, best practices and strategies employed by indigenous movements or organizations to improving living conditions of urban indigenous peoples including access to healthcare, employment opportunities, culturally appropriate education, language instruction, adequate housing, safe drinking water, sanitation and other critical infrastructure.

The APA has been providing guidance and support to Indigenous Peoples in many ways, including in seeking pro bono representation in legal processes, referral to relevant government ministries or agencies on issues such as social services and labour, making visits to homes, hospitals, prisons and incarceration centres, and supporting interventions through the press. These efforts though, have largely been for individual persons and most times from personal resources and time of staff since the organization largely works in the communities out of the city as an advocacy organization but with the secretariat in the city of Georgetown. During the COVID – 19 pandemic, the APA has supported families living in the city to provide COVID-19 relief supplies. APA Staff who live in the city have provided translation services for persons who are brought to Georgetown to seek medical attention or who are forced to go to court. Where possible, indigenous peoples living in the city support each other and try to keep their culture alive, for example by meeting up and speaking in their own languages and sharing their cultural practices.

What are States currently doing to address the needs of urban indigenous peoples in both law and practice? Examples may include protocols to guarantee political representation, participation of urban indigenous peoples in decision making, social programs, urban planning, land use regulations or support for indigenous-owned businesses and service providers. Please explain how the impact of these measures have improved the situation.

The government of Guyana is not currently taking any targeted or specific measures to address the needs of urban Indigenous Peoples in law and in practice. There are no specific protocols or policies in place to guarantee political representation of indigenous peoples or participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making spaces.

There are attempts to ensure the appointment of at least one indigenous representative on various boards or committees, but these are usually related to projects the government is undertaking in the hinterland, e.g., for working groups on the EU-FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement. However, these generally appear more to be for the sake of checking off a requirement for such inclusion rather than genuine attempts at participatory decision-making, and there is no such effort in spaces for decision-making that affects discrimination against Indigenous Peoples in urban areas.

What measures or policies can be adopted to remove existing obstacles facing urban indigenous peoples? For example, what is being done by states or indigenous organisations to ensure that urban indigenous peoples have access to adequate health care; employment opportunities, culturally

appropriate education and language instruction; housing, drinking water, sanitation and other critical infrastructure? Please specify if such measures exist but are not being implemented.

There are non-discrimination and equality before the law provisions in the Constitution and in national legislation. However, these should be better implemented in practice to prevent discrimination against indigenous peoples living in urban areas. The government should provide funding to ensure state provision of translation services for indigenous peoples in health care, other social services, and the legal system. The curriculum in urban schools should be revised to include education on indigenous history and culture, and there should be options to allow for education in indigenous languages. Although the government provides a Hinterland Scholarship Programme for youths to attend secondary school in towns, there should be funding to assist with tertiary education so that indigenous students are not forced to work and attend school at the same time. In addition, the government needs to take the level of education and forms of institutions to the hinterland regions of Guyana so there would be no need to be living in the city to attend for example, the University of Guyana. The government needs to enhance its monitoring agencies on labour and worker's rights and holding these entities accountable to ensure there is no exploitation on all workers and especially Indigenous Persons in urban areas. Last but not least, the government of Guyana needs to enhance its approach to respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples to effective consultation, enhanced participation and respecting the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent in national decision making.

The Amerindian Peoples Association (APA) thanks you for providing this space to submit our interventions.