

ASSEMBLY OF ARMENIANS OF WESTERN ARMENIA

Item 7: The Sustainable Development Goals and the rights of indigenous peoples

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Assembly of Armenians of Western Armenia thanks you for addressing the theme of sustainable development. The role of heritage is extremely important to sustainable human development, and we congratulate and welcome with great honor the recent efforts made by UNESCO, which is holding at this very moment—concurrent with EMRIP's meeting—its 40th session for the protection of monuments and sacred sites.

This is the case for including in the agenda our historical capital Ani, which was the capital of Armenia from 961-1045 and which is said to have had 1001 churches.

We are convinced that UNESCO is able to preserve these historical, national and Christian values. Hence, in order to protect the sustainable development of the heritage of Indigenous Armenians, we must first start by reestablishing, first and foremost, historical truth and the truth about the precise name and nature of the city of Ani, which is found in Western Armenia and not in "Eastern Anatolia". The name "Eastern Anatolia" does not exist within any serious and reliable historical sources. Likewise, on the old Ottoman maps, this geographical label did not exist before the 18th Century. Instead, Ottoman maps used the term, "Ermenistan Vilayet", which means "Armenian Province".

The Armenians of Western Armenia who are currently living on their historical lands in Western Armenia—as well as those Armenians who, because of genocide and deportations, have been forced into exile in other countries—are the most appropriate entities to evaluate the efforts intended to preserve those historical and cultural monuments existing on the territory of Western Armenia with respect to the noble efforts that the UNESCO Committee carries out within the context of its honorable mission.

We have at our disposal a document which shows evidence of the mass and indiscriminate destruction that the city of Ani has suffered over the last 75 years. This study presents one part of what has happened on the site by detailing the ongoing instances of destruction and annihilation, which are described by dozens of similar documents and reports.

The falsification of names and labels is part of cultural genocide, a genocide of which no person, even indirectly, would want to be the initiator.

The Armenians of Western Armenia would like to bring EMRIP's attention first of all to Article 8 of the Declaration: *1. Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture. 2. States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for: (a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities; (b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources;* this Article 8 is not respected.

Consequently, on the basis of the expertise of ICOMOS (WHC/16/40.COM/INF.8B1 - Evaluations of Nominations of Cultural and Mixed Properties to the World Heritage List), the present session of the Committee has adopted a document and explanations of the recommendation on the basis of facts presented by Turkey on insufficient grounds, considered unjustified and inappropriate without our free, prior and informed consent. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out additional research.

The majority of information and evidence presented is insufficient, imprecise, and inappropriate relative to the questions raised. In fact, the original founders of Ani, its affiliation, its Armenian history, as well as its foundations, are not defined or respected.

In conclusion, the inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List made at the request of an occupying State for a site that belongs to the occupied populations is an illegal act according to international law.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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