

Submission to the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 31 UNDRIP

INDIGENOUS SOUTH AFRICAN PLANT SPECIES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DRY LAND FOOD PRODUCTION BY INDIGENOUS KHOISAN PEOPLES

A request to the United Nations for Assistance and Guidance to Implement Article 31 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in Southern Africa.

Archaeological evidence shows that the KhoiSan people's of Southern Africa utilised more than 100 indigenous plant species to develop a food and health system for evolving and prospering within the unpredictable climatic and environmental conditions of the region. Since the arrival of Europeans about 365 years ago the knowledge of this food and health system although recorded was systematically ignored and neglected with only about 8 plant species developed by the European colonists primarily for their economic beneficiation. Article 31 of the UNDRIP and Article 15, No. 169 of the ILO require that the natural resources and indigenous knowledge of the KhoiSan peoples become central to Southern Africa's socio-economic development, restoration and innovation efforts.

Surely these 100 primarily drought tolerant plant species can provide opportunities for innovations to deal with water scarcity and climate change challenges. It can provide solutions for productive use of dry marginalised land, and for establishing youth enterprises and new markets. The KhoiSan peoples do not ask for backward movement to a traditional system, but an active participation in modern scientific, technological, agricultural and economic development initiatives. What was primitive and neglected will contribute to economic development platforms that will contribute to entrepreneurship, poverty alleviation, job creation and a removal of various forms of inequalities in our nation.

Problem 1: South African Bioprospecting, Indigenous Knowledge and Bio-economy policies and regulations do not directly accommodate the food resources of the KhoiSan peoples for development. Economic development policies are racially based.

Problem 2: Priority is placed on the development of a few medicinal plant species for bioprospecting that are of interest to export companies and benefit primarily individuals from European descent, restricting indigenous peoples as collectors and harvesters of plant material.

Opportunity 1 out of 100 species: A wild grass species (*Thinopyrum distichum*, synonym *Agropyron distichum*), have been listed in archaeological studies as a KhoiSan food. It can be crossed breed with breadwheat for new salt and drought tolerant cultivars.

Opportunity 2 out of 100 species: *Galenia africana* (kraalbos) plant extract can become a new biostimulant fertiliser for crop production, but its registration remains delayed in the South African Department of Agriculture.

We therefore make a formal request to the United Nation Instruments to provide comprehensive assistance and guidance under the UNDRIP Article 31 for the legitimate control, protection and development of KhoiSan indigenous plant resources.

Submitted by: Prof. Jeremy Klaasen (PhD), Indigenous Peoples Activist, Academic and Member of Khoi Heritage Foundation.

jeremyklaasen@uwc.ac.za

+27 +21 959 2054