**Oral statement**

**Date and Time: Oct 19 morning**

**Panel: Affected Peoples voices**

**FoEI speaker: James Otto**

**Thank you Mr. Chairman,**

**My name is James Otto and I am speaking on behalf of Friends of the Earth International, Africa Region.**

**Africans remain victims to most of the grave human rights violations associated with the operations of transnational corporations, which builds on a history of colonization and oppression against our peoples. The current situation of corporate impunity is not exclusive to Africa, but extends to other regions of the globe where legal frameworks of the state institutions are powerless due to the bilateral relations with the home countries of companies that control global chains of production.**

**In 2015, Golden Veroleum Liberia, a transnational oil palm company operating in Liberia, made use of state security forces to harass, intimidate, abuse and imprison community members of Butaw district who were simply seeking the fulfilment of social agreements promised to the community by the company.**

**A young man died in prison from his wounds sustained during this brutality, 15 men and women remained in prison for over a year without any formal charges, and another woman died a month after being released from prison.**

**To date, not a single action has been taken by the government and/or the company to address the plight of these people.**

**This inhumane incident clearly shows the power of TNCs to circumvent state laws and is indicative of the inability of national institutions to hold companies accountable for their gross human rights violations in areas where they operate. It is therefore crucial that this treaty establishes direct obligations for TNCs to respect Human Rights therefore enabling affected people to seek justice and reparation in the courts of the TNC’s home country and in an international human rights court on TNCs.**

**Unless there is a framework (such as the binding treaty) to hold these kinds of companies accountable outside of the jurisdiction in which they operate, communities and human rights defenders in regions like Africa will perpetually remain targets of such atrocities.**

**I am very proud to see unity in the African region voiced here by Togo regarding a commitment to support this urgently needed treaty as a mean to right the wrongs of decades of corporate impunity.**

**This is the moment for all states to respond to those who elect them and civil society to protect the interests of the communities they represent and work with**

**Thank you.**