**PRESENTATION BY MONSIEUR ALEXIS INGABIRE**

**from the COPORWA organisation (Rwandese Community of Potters)**

**at the 8th session of the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights**

**Mr President,**

**We have the pleasure to present the situation of the Indigenous Batwa People of Rwanda, with regard to the respect of human rights by businesses.**

**Mr President,**

**The Batwa potters are part of Rwanda’s smallest ethnic group, and are the poorest and the most vulnerable. They are part of the Batwa denomination, pygmy potters ; and in the words used in the Rwandan policy, a “historically marginalised population”.**

**Traditionally hunter-gatherers, they were chased from their native forests in order to allow for the creation of touristic national parks such as the Virunga National Park, and natural protected areas like the Gishwati and Nyungwe natural forests.**

**All of this has caused many problems for the Batwa such as :**

* **A loss of their identity due to their lack of recognition as an indigenous people**
* **A loss of URUTWA, their mother tongue**
* **A loss of their culture such as traditional dances or their INTWATWA songs**

**This brutal eviction, without compensation, nor consensus, nor preparation, nor prior consent, has gravely affected their lifestyle.**

**Nowadays, the difference between the Batwa and other ethnic groups is becoming more and more slight, we are blending into the major ethnic groups.**

**In 2012, the Batwa made up 0.4% of the total Rwandan population, and with an estimation of around 33 000 people; we are in danger of disappearing.**

**We recommend that the Rwandan government acknowledge the Batwa people as an indigenous people.**

**We recommend that the Rwandan government ratify the ILO’s Convention No. 169.**

**We recommend that the Rwandan government facilitate the Batwa, “a historically marginalised people”, and put policies into place that facilitate their accommodation, their children’s education, and their access to land to cultivate.**

**We recommend the UN agencies and ambassadors to do everything in their power to help the Rwandan Batwas, in order to get them out of this vulnerable situation.**

**We recommend that the assembly make our problem understood and heard throughout the whole world.**

**Thank you for your attention.**