

To:

Lazare Eloundou Assomo
Director, UNESCO World Heritage Centre

Philippe Allard
Director-General, ICOMOS

Tim Badman,
Director, IUCN World Heritage Program

Francisco Calí Tzay
UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

February 6, 2024

Re: Serious concern on the ongoing visit of UNESCO / IUCN / ICOMOS advisory bodies mission to Ngorongoro World Heritage Site between 3rd and 9th February 2024

Dear Mr Eloundo Assomo, Mr Allard, Mr Badman and Mr Cali Tzay,

We would like to express our serious concern regarding the above-mentioned mission that is currently taking place in Ngorongoro. We are aware of different consultations that the Maasai peoples in Ngorongoro have had with your institution, during which they have expressed the devastating effects of being sidelined and ignored in previous missions, which have resulted in recommendations from your organisations that have been to their detriment. Based on these recommendations, the United Republic of Tanzania took actions that have seriously affected the Maasai's rights, contrary to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which UNESCO is obliged to respect.

We are also aware of the petition made to you by the Maasai in Ngorongoro on their situation and one of their requests was for UNESCO **to organize and undertake a mission with the full and effective participation of the Maasai in the NCA, thus ensuring that their voices and demands are heard and reflected in the report and its recommendations. This is in line with Decision 44 COM 7B.171 of the World Heritage Committee.**

As a result of that outcry of the Maasai which reached the World Heritage Center, UNESCO and its advisory bodies promised the Maasai that they will be engaged in the next mission of UNESCO.

However, on 4th February 2024, the Maasai of Ngorongoro received information from informal sources that the UNESCO mission and its allies are making an official mission to Ngorongoro and confirmed that they are meeting with people selected by the Government. Maasai representatives have received information that the mission was only able to engage with government-appointed stakeholders.

We are also aware that one of the initial members of the mission was removed at the government's request, raising doubts as to the independence and the transparency of the work of the mission. Given the lack of transparency and the lack of meaningful engagement with the Maasai people, including their representatives during the course of this mission, we believe that the final report of the mission will lack the necessary credibility and will only carry information that has been selected by the government. No one in the Maasai community in Ngorongoro is aware of the UNESCO mission's visit and the mission's freedom to obtain independent and accurate information about the situation on the ground is definitely compromised. Until today on their first visit to the site, it is not known either to the commission or to the community who the commission is going to meet, as it is completely controlled by the government.

We are deeply dismayed by this situation, and by the fact that the Maasai and their organizations – despite regular communication with UNESCO – have not been informed beforehand about this mission. This raises serious doubt on UNESCO's willingness to stop the human rights abuses in the NCA World Heritage Site, which result in part from its own decisions and recommendations.

Given this situation, we urge UNESCO :

- to take immediate action to ensure that the affected communities are being heard and consulted. If the UNESCO is not able to guarantee the transparency and inclusivity of this mission, it should
- halt it and work towards creating a legitimate space where the Maasai peoples can freely and openly engage with this process, as they previously requested.

As MISA, we consider the mission as currently conducted as completely illegitimate and will denounce it publicly.

Faithfully,

MISA, Maasai International Solidarity alliance

The Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA)

The **Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA)** is an international alliance standing in solidarity with the Maasai of Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Loliondo in northern Tanzania. We bring together faith-based organisations, human rights organisations, international aid and development organisations as well as researchers. Our alliance includes, among others, the Africa Europe FaithJustice Network (AEFJN), Agrecol Association for AgriCulture & Ecology, Coalition of EuropeanLobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism (CELEP), Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité (CIDSE, International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity), Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN), Koordinierungsstelle der Österreichischen Bischofskonferenz (KOO, Coordinating Office of the Austrian Bishops' Conference), Misereor, Survival International and Welthaus Graz. Our main objective is to put an end to the human rights violations facing the Maasai of northern Tanzania.

In June 2023, we jointly organised a lobbying tour to Germany, Austria, Belgium and Italy, which enabled a Maasai delegation to voice their concerns to European decision-makers and trigger international solidarity. We support the voices of grassroots organisations representing the Maasai at the local level, such as PINGOs (Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organisations) Forum, UCRT (Ujamaa Community Resource Team), PWC (Pastoral Women's Council), TEST (Traditional Ecosystems Survival Tanzania), IDINGO (Integrated Development Initiative in Ngorongoro) and PALISEP (Pastoralist Livelihood Support and Empowerment Program). These grassroots organisations are well recognised for their long-standing work in Maasai communities and are in regular contact with affected communities and their representatives, including traditional leaders, women and youth as well as councillors / village chairpersons. We are also supported by Tanzanian lawyers representing the Maasai in the several court cases that have been launched to address the violations of their land rights.