

Statement at the 61st Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 4: General Debate

16/03/2026

Mr. President,

I stand before you today to bring attention to the people of Turkana in northern Kenya communities living on land rich in oil, yet burdened by decades of marginalization, broken promises, and uncertainty.

In 2010, the discovery of more than 500 million barrels of oil raised hopes for prosperity. Communities believed development had finally arrived. Roads were built, people migrated to the region seeking opportunity, and expectations soared. Yet more than a decade later, the promise of prosperity remains largely unfulfilled.

The initial operator halted activities in 2020 after years of setbacks, leaving unfinished infrastructure and communities facing uncertainty. Today, a new company plans to invest billions and begin commercial production. While this has renewed hope, it has also revived serious concerns about transparency, environmental protection, and the fair distribution of benefits.

For the people of Turkana, this is not simply about oil. It is about dignity, justice, and inclusion.

Most families rely on livestock herding for survival, yet recurring droughts have devastated herds and intensified competition over scarce water and grazing land. Large-scale oil development without strong safeguards risks deepening their vulnerability.

Communities such as Kapese, Nakukulas, and Lokichar have secured collective land titles under Kenya's Community Land Act. They are now demanding meaningful participation in decisions affecting their land, transparent agreements that guarantee fair revenue sharing and local economic opportunities, and strong environmental safeguards to protect water, land, and pastoral livelihoods.

These demands are not radical they are basic human rights.

The international community must ensure that development in Turkana respects these rights and delivers real benefits to the people who call this land home.

Thank you.

