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First of all, I bring you the greetings from the tiny kingdom of Nepal at the roof of the world.

Though Nepal is a small country, it abounds not only in its natural beauties, but also in plurality and diversity of races, ethnicities, castes, cultures, languages and religions. Out of 95 ethnic and caste groups of the country His Majesty's Government has identified 59 ethnic groups as indigenous peoples or nationalities. According to 2001 Census, they comprise 37.2 percent of the total population of 22.7 million.

Indigenous peoples of Nepal have long painful and humiliating experiences of state terrorism, political subjugation and exclusion, social exclusion and domination, cultural destruction and economic exploitation. They have been marginalized through centuries. They have no access to national resources, power and prestige. They are still discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity, culture, language and religion. The state has expropriated their lands and distributed to new settlers belonging dominant caste groups. The government denied the traditional rights of indigenous peoples on natural resources. The government rescinded its all previous commitments or decrees which were promulgated as a result of agreements between the government and concerned indigenous peoples. Today, these people neither have access to national resources nor to local resources. On the one hand their traditional socio-political system have been destroyed and the new socio-political systems imposed on them by the state were found neither inclusive nor progressive or growth-enhancing to them on the other. Today, some groups such as Kusunda, bankariya, Raute, Kushbadiya, Munda, Khadiya, Kisan, Chhairrotan, Raji, Lapcha, Meche are on the verge of extinction.

Unequal treatment, discrimination, socio-political exclusion and resource deprivation have placed indigenous peoples and nationalities of Nepal at a disadvantaged position and their human rights have been neglected. The gap between indigenous peoples or nationalities and the dominant caste groups is enormously increasing. It is attributed to national policies and development failures. This is also the reason that the country is facing a grave conflict situation. It is obvious that if ethnic issues are not properly addressed, violent conflict will not subside.

Indigenous peoples or nationalities of Nepal are claiming for the recognition of their cultural rights, self-government rights, special representation rights and right to special measures for the improvement of their social and economic conditions. The government is reluctant to accept these claims and recognize such fundamental rights of indigenous

peoples and nationalities. So, indigenous peoples of Nepal have to go long way to fulfill their mission.

Hence, I request this forum to recommend:

- To respect the human rights of indigenous peoples and recognize their right to self-determination.
- To adopt Declaration of the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples without any delay.
- To declare another International Decade for the Indigenous Peoples.
- To have coordination unit for the economic and social development within Permanent Forum secretariat.

Thank you