



**MEGHALAYA PEOPLES' HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
INDIA**

**Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Third Session, 12-16 July 2010**

Agenda item No: 4 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Thank you Mr. Chairman for giving me the floor.

Greetings to all your Excellencies and distinguished delegates!

This intervention is submitted by the Meghalaya Peoples' Human Rights Council, which represents the Khasi Indigenous community from the state of Meghalaya known as scheduled tribes in India.

First of all allow me to express my thanks and appreciations to the OHCHR for inviting me to this prestigious panel meet that come within the agenda of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Third session.

I therefore consider it a privilege to be deemed competent enough to present before this august gathering, my humble views on such an important issue relating to the use of the Declaration to promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples.

Mr. Chairman,

Historically, the Khasi Hills in the state of Meghalaya, India, was annexed and subjugated under the British Government between 1835 and 1839. However, later by Article 244(2) of the Constitution of India 1950 the governance was carried on according to the provisions of the Sixth Schedule, which resulted in the creation of the District Council on June 1952. Under the Sixth Schedule, the District Councils are provided with considerable executive, legislative, financial and judicial powers in relation to internal administration of the concerned areas within its jurisdiction. By the middle of the 1950s the political movement for a separate State became one of the political agendas and gradually the struggle became a people's movement from the 1960s. Ultimately the Union Government of India had to consider and reorganize the State of Assam and the formation of the State of Meghalaya in 1972.

Mr. Chairman,

The creation of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as one of the international platform has help us reach out to each other from different backgrounds as Indigenous Peoples to challenge the different pattern of human rights violations and other exploitative global economics policies such as the

mining practices. We want to collectively define our perspective of sustainable development and utilization of the world's resources and to rebuild our lives and identities, which are being destroyed by the mining and other form of Extractive Industries. Meghalaya is one such state in India which continue to suffer from the exploitation of mining practices. A particular example is the granting of mining lease for extracting and carrying of limestone from Meghalaya, India to Bangladesh for the requirement of manufacturing cement by M/S. Lafarge Mining Ltd. in the form of a joint venture where this matter is now pending with the Supreme Court of India. Further the proposed Uranium mines in the Meghalaya, India, which is facing very strong resistance from the local indigenous peoples due to the fear of the radioactive exposure that will cause severe health & human rights violations. From the experiences we have shared in our region, hundreds of peoples have been affected by mining projects and other extractive industries. We want to state that mining has had a serious negative impacts on women's lives, livelihoods, social and cultural status, physical and sexual rights, ecological spaces, access to and control over land and natural resources, legal and customary rights and traditional knowledge systems. Mining has also generated serious development myths, which we challenge from the Indigenous Peoples perspective.

Mr. Chairman,

Further, for more than 36 year now have passed, the Interstate border disputes involving the states of Assam and Meghalaya have often resulted in violence and killings. At present there are 12 points of dispute along the 733 kilometre Assam-Meghalaya border of the North East India. The recent illegal and perverse action of the Assam Police Personnel 14.05.2010 in opening indiscriminate firing (188 rounds) on a group of unarmed local villagers of Langpoh in the West Khasi Hills District, of Meghalaya, thereby killing 4 (four) innocent Khasi civilians is another reminder about the volatile situation along all the disputed border areas. The root cause of the inter-state border disputes can be traced back to the decision to carve out new political entities out of the state of Assam. Various commissions have not taken into account the root of the dispute-which remains the reassertion of historical boundary. On its part, Assam's border intransigence coupled with using migrants under police protection, to occupy disputed areas have only compounded the problems.

Therefore taking into consideration the above few concrete examples we recommend the EMRIP to request member state to translate the provision contained in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into the indigenous peoples understanding, so that it is valued and implemented both at the national and local level.

Thank you, (KHUBLEI).

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