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Ms. Nadariya Napakon Phomyothi

**Statement of the Thai Delegation
At the
Fifth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
17 May 2006**

Madam Chair,
Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum of Indigenous Peoples,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to address the concerns about Hmong refugees expressed by the representative of the World Hmong People's Congress on 16 May 2006, regarding the exhumation of Hmong graves at the Wat Tham Krabok monastery.

Wat Tham Krabok, a Buddhist monastery in Saraburi, has long been a refuge for Hmongs in Thailand. For years, tens of thousands of Hmong have lived in the area. Inevitably, some have also died of natural causes. Hmongs have buried their loved ones on the monastery's grounds, which are on hillsides and high grounds. This poses an environmental risk to the surrounding ecology which would directly affect the local population, including the Hmongs themselves.

In addition, in October 2005, the Tham Krabok Foundation planned to convert the area into a museum, a place for religious activities and a public park, and has informed the Hmong community of the necessity to relocate the graves from the monastery's grounds. Indeed, some Hmongs have come to reclaim their relatives' bodies for relocation. For those graves left unclaimed, the monastery had arranged a public cremation ceremony, a service that many monasteries generally provide as charity for the deceased who are with no known relatives and whose bodies are left unclaimed. Ashes of those cremated are respectfully placed at the Pothipowanasongkrau graveyard, in the same province, Saraburi.

I assure you that all of the processes mentioned are carried out with the greatest respect for the deceased, as well as consideration for the living.

Thank you.
