

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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### Environment

On behalf of the Asia Pacific Indigenous Youth Network, I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to present this statement. My name is Jiten Yumnam of the Meitei people of the Imphal valley, Manipur. I would like to begin affirming that indigenous youths are the inheritors of the unique values, given to our ancestors and protected by our elders, especially on conservation and the sustainable use of our environment and resources, which is central to our survival as indigenous peoples.

An introspection into the decade after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio De Janeiro in 1992 would inform us that the promises made to ensure a equitable and participatory process in promoting sustainable development is far from being realized, as development projects, mega dams, huge corporate mining projects, loggings etc are being enforced on our ancestral lands without our free, prior

and informed consent, causing irreparable damages to our lands and resources, and as the absolute and sovereign rights of indigenous peoples to our lands and natural resources is increasingly being pushed into the sidetrack.. The mega dams, illegal logging, corporate mining, that continues to operate in Chittagong Hill Tract in Bangladesh, PNG, Kalimantan in Indonesia, India's North East Region, Cordillera in Philippines and many other pacific islands are a living testimony of the undemocratic, anti-environment and anti-life approach of governments to subdue the rights of indigenous peoples.

The follow up process of Rio Conference and the WSSD, failed to respect and observe the fundamental outcomes of the events, especially the involvement of indigenous youths in decision-making process. For instance, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change still failed to recognize the participation of indigenous peoples. The COP 8 session at New Delhi, October 2002 still failed to consider this important need and as such indigenous youths continues to be excluded. And at the national levels, many governments in Asia and Pacific has failed to respect the participation of indigenous peoples and youths in the national policy planning process for conservation and sustainable use of environment, also failing to implement national legal standards associated for conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

Imposition of privatization, de-regulation and economic structural adjustment program have further supported or favored corporate or elite groups, which often causes conflicts among peoples, peoples and governments and violence, compounded by the intensive

militarization process associated with such developmental projects, Human rights violations resulting out of such situations continues to target indigenous youths.

Developmental projects, while brining untold misery, failed to encompass the issues of human rights, ecological consequences, genuine ecological and economic sustainability of indigenous peoples. The right to information to planning, implementation and evaluation to developmental projects has not been respected.

The Asia Pacific Indigenous Youth Network would like to urge members of the Permanent Forum to urge upon member states, UN agencies, program and funds to ensure participation of indigenous youths in all environment protection mechanisms, especially follow up of the Agenda 21 and WSSD, especially the COPs to CBD, UNFF, CCD, Ramsar Conventions on Wetlands, UNFCCC etc.

Member states be urged to adopt the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to ratify the ILO Convention no 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

The indigenous youths demands full recognition of the indigenous peoples inherent right to Self Determination. In this regard, the indigenous youths would like to request Permanent Forum to urge member states for a complete and immediate withdrawal of all military and para military personnel operating in indigenous peoples land and territories.

The Asia Pacific Indigenous Youth Network prioritizes building solidarity and unity among indigenous youths, to consolidate our strength to fight against all undemocratic process to ensure our meaningful contribution in full assertion of indigenous peoples rights, and as such, the APIYN would like to request the Permanent Forum to support all initiatives of the indigenous youths to realize this objective. The capacity building of indigenous youths must be prioritized for our empowerment. In this regard, I endorse the call of my friend Elizabeth of Indian International Treaty Council, in the Panel discussion on Indigenous children and youths, requesting the Permanent Forum to support the Second International Indigenous Youth Conference, planned to be held at Vancouver.

Lastly, I would like to thank the chairman and the Permanent Forum and expresses my certainty that the Permanent Forum would continue to prioritize the importance of involvement of Indigenous Youths in all process affecting indigenous peoples.

Thanking you