

5th Session
UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES
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AWI MONA

Agenda item: 4 Ongoing priorities and themes

Joint statement by—

1. Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO)
2. Flying Eagle Woman Funds
3. Alliance of Taiwan Indigenous Peoples Non-government Organization (IPNGO)
4. Association of Taiwanese Indigenous Peoples' College (ATIPC)
5. Asian Indigenous Peoples' Caucus
6. Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation
7. Dabalorivhuwa Patriotic Front
8. Lao Human Rights Council
9. Southern Cameroons National Council
10. Taiwan Foundation for Democracy

Honorable Madam Chair and distinguished members and friends of the Permanent Forum,

As an UNPO member, we are here today on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan to bring your attention to an important issue in reference to the official language used in the U.N. documents to address "Indigenous Peoples" in Chinese as "土著人民" (Tu Zhu), which connotes racial discrimination and cultural inferiority. We respectfully request and strongly recommend the replacement of "Tu Zhu" (土著人民) with "Yuan Zhu Min Zu" (原住民族), which connotes the Peoples who originated from and also have the right to the land.

Chinese language is not only one of the official languages used in the United Nations but also offers explanation of the concept of Indigenous peoples for Chinese-speaking societies. With every single reference to "Indigenous peoples" as "土著人民", we confront cultural and political stigmatization and stereotype as "backwards" and "barbaric." Therefore, many Indigenous peoples are reluctant to admit their Indigenous origins because of the implication of inferiority.

Madam Chair and dear brothers and sisters in our indigenous communities, we would like to briefly share a similar and positive experience of name correction of Indigenous peoples in Taiwan with all of you.

Prior to 1994, the Taiwan government used "shan-bao" (山胞) to refer to the Indigenous peoples, which means "Mountain Peoples" and entails the connotation of discrimination and racism. The campaign of self-identification and name correction by the indigenous peoples in Taiwan was initiated in 1984 and gradually received a positive response from the Taiwan government to change the term to "Yuan Zhu Min" (原住民) with full consultation with us in 1994. To further respond to the international human rights development, Indigenous peoples in Taiwan continued our campaign to identify ourselves as "Indigenous nations," which reinforce the indigenous identity in Taiwan. In 1997, the term "Yuan Zhu Min Zu" (原住民族) was adopted into the constitution and now an official term used in Taiwan. The term "Yuan Zhu Min Zu" not only recognizes our rights but also our

statue to the land. The experience of name-correction is a positive development of indigenous rights from “individual right” to “group and collective rights.”

Madam Chair, we would also like to call on your attention on the use of the term “土著人民” (Tu Zhu) without full consultation with Chinese-speaking Indigenous peoples.

The literal Chinese translation of indigenous peoples as “土著人民” is local inhabitants. As we closely examine the term “Tu Zhu”(土著人民) in the context of Chinese-speaking societies, it indicates that Indigenous peoples are inferior, disrespected, and discriminated against. Above all, this term does not address the vital and critical issues of close ties between Indigenous peoples and their lands. Tu Zhu (土著人民) merely indicates a group of people residing in certain areas as local people without recognizing their legal rights to land.

Madam Chair, in your opening address to the Forum, the adoption of “Indigenous peoples” as a universal usage is a struggling and negotiation process for all Indigenous peoples around the world. However, the Chinese translation of Indigenous peoples, without consultations with us, lacks legitimacy. The most fundamental level here is about a process to identify who we are, in terms of how we relate ourselves with the world around us. According to the articles 1, 2 and 8 stated in the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, every Indigenous person is entitled to the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on equal terms with others in the larger society, without discrimination of any kind.

To fully respect the rights and dignity of indigenous peoples, we strongly make the following recommendations:

1. **To conduct a full consultation with Indigenous peoples regarding the translation of “Indigenous peoples” in Chinese.**
2. **We call for any adoption of the Chinese translation regarding Indigenous peoples’ issues to acquire the “free, prior, and informed consent” of Indigenous peoples as stated in the Draft Declaration.**
3. **We recommend the replacement of “土著人民” (Tu Zhu) with “原住民族” (Yuan Zhu Min Zu), in all United Nations’ documents.**

Hereby we appeal to this Forum to change the Chinese translation of Tu Zhu (土著人民) to “Yuan Zhu Min Zu” (原住民族) as resonated by our brothers and sisters in the Asian Indigenous Peoples’ Caucus and Youth Caucus. We also call on the Forum to recommend a special meeting to the future UN Human Rights Council and the UN WGIP to consult the Indigenous peoples on this important issue.