Madam Chair, this is my second time at this UN forum, and today my message is more urgent than before. In my homeland in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, the Ipili and Engan people have seen their traditions turned upside-down by the influence of a large-scale mining project. In one generation, the mine has brought militarization, corruption, and environmental devastation to a land that previously knew only subsistence farming and alluvial mining.

Last year, I explained that mine guards and police were killing locals and raping our women; there have been five more killings and many more rapes since. Last year, I described how our food sources were threatened by mine waste dumped directly into the river system and how my people were exposed to dangerous chemicals like cyanide and mercury; today, those practices continue. Last year, I complained that the mine is directly next to our homes; and just three weeks ago, the Papua New Guinea government, motivated by reports presented by the mining company, unleashed “State of Emergency,” a police and military operation that saw hundreds of homes of indigenous land owners surrounding the open pit mine razed to the ground.

This is a textbook case of what can go wrong when large-scale mining confronts Indigenous Peoples, ignoring the impacts of its projects and resorting to goon squads when people rebel against it.

The increasing global power and influence of trans-national companies like the Canadian Barrick Gold, managers of the Porgera mine means that they, alongside the PNG government, must be responsible for upholding human rights within their spheres of influence.

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the National Goals and Directive Principal that underlie the PNG constitution codify, not only the moral responsibility to uphold rights of affected Indigenous Peoples in PNG, but also is increasingly seen as implying their legal liability as organs of society to respect, promote and secure human rights.

In addition to wreaking havoc on local communities, these mines pollute vital water sources and require an immense amount of energy to run. The Porgera mine alone produces over 400,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases and consumes over 7 billion gallons of water a year, which it continually dumps – polluted – into a 800 km-long river system, eventually leading to the Gulf of Papua and reaching the Great Barrier Reef. In a time of impending climate change, this environmental devastation affects us all.
We recommend that the Permanent Forum:

1. Urge the Permanent Forum to write urgently to the Government of Papua New Guinea and Barrick Gold Corporation of Canada appealing for an urgent halt to the State of Emergency and the destruction of peoples homes.

2. Endorse the recommendations put forth in the report of the expert group meeting on extractive industries, Indigenous Peoples' rights and corporate social responsibility, which met in March 2009 in Manila, Philippines;

3. Calls for activation of the World Bank 2005 Extractive Industries Review and for activation of the previous interventions to address the impact and legacy of extractive industries on Indigenous Lands, territories and natural resources;

4. Investigates how to set up an Indigenous arbitration system, a regulatory regime, to control the practices of the trans-national mining companies, other extractive industries, forestry and fisheries;

5. Forms an agency to evaluate the amount Indigenous communities involuntarily subsidize the mining industry and other extractive industries through their natural resources, which are seized with minimal compensation, if any, by forms of colonialism perpetrated by trans-national companies;

Thank you.

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