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10th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
UN Headquarter, 16 – 27 May 2011

Tuesday, 17 May, 2011 10 a.m.-1 p.m.  
Conference Room 1, United Nations, New York

Agenda Item 3: Follow-up to the Recommendations of the Permanent Forum: (b) Environment

**Statement by Asia Indigenous Peoples' Caucus  
Delivered by Rukka Sombolinggi**

MADAM CHAIRPERSON, distinguished members of the PFII, Indigenous Brothers and Sisters, State delegations, ladies and gentlemen.

I am speaking on behalf of the Asia Indigenous Peoples' Caucus. The following is the result of the Regional Preparatory Meeting of Asia's Indigenous Peoples on the UN Mechanisms and Procedures relating to Indigenous Peoples in Chiang Mai, Thailand in February 2011. One of the key discussions was on agenda of the UNPFII 10<sup>th</sup> session, particularly to review the recommendations on the Economic and Social Development, Environment, and the Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) made by previous sessions.

In relation to environment and forests, we continue to experience the following:

Asian indigenous peoples' land, territories and resources continue to be the targets of governments and multinational companies for resource extraction and development aggression projects, including large-scale mining, mega-hydro dams, logging, plantations and infrastructure development. These projects cause conflicts and displacement of indigenous peoples from our ancestral lands and territories; loss of livelihoods and health complications; serious environmental degradations; and severely affect the social economic development of our communities, as well as our capability to sustain our traditional conservation of our lands and natural resources, including of our forests.

In many Asian countries, governments impose restrictive policies and laws in the name of forest conservation and development, seeking to eradicate shifting cultivation and other traditional livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples. This can be equated to cultural genocide as our peoples have relied on traditional livelihoods for generations to survive. In many instances, indigenous farmers are criminalized and fined for practicing our traditional farming systems.

We are now additionally confronted with actions related to Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) programmes. Such actions can threaten our livelihoods, including our practice of traditional forest management systems. Conversion of indigenous peoples' lands and forests for large scale production of biofuels as part of climate change mitigation measures have also adversely affected indigenous peoples' food sovereignty and rights to water, shelter and health etc.

There are grave concerns among us about these ongoing threats to our traditional use of forests for spiritual and ceremonial purposes, shifting cultivation, source of timber and non-timber forest products, medicines and other agro-forestry activities.

Madam Chair, we continue to reiterate that governments, intergovernmental bodies and corporations should recognize the rights of indigenous peoples to the forests, which include our traditional knowledge, practices and customary governance systems on forests and other ecosystems. To protect these rights, State policies and programmes in environmental and forest related-sectors should be consistent with the UN DRIP.

Madam Chair, the Asia Indigenous Peoples' Caucus acknowledges that the PFII have made substantive recommendations on environmental and forest issues relevant to indigenous peoples over the past nine years that were addressed to the States, UN agencies, multilateral bodies and inter-governmental organizations. However, there are still major gaps towards the implementation of those recommendations. The PFII should therefore reiterate and remind the States of their obligations and for the relevant agencies to ensure implementation.

In particular, we would like to call your attention to the efforts of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to develop a policy of engagement for indigenous peoples. The GEF is the funding facility for the implementation of various environmental conventions and as such most of its work impacts on indigenous peoples. It is therefore, urgent and imperative that indigenous peoples are fully involve in this process. We also recommend the active participation of the UNPFII in this process to ensure consistency of the UNDRIP with the GEF indigenous peoples policy.

We urge the UNPFII to establish a sub-committee to follow up directly the implementation of recommendations issued to specific Member States, UN agencies, funds and programs.

In addition to the above, we further request the Forum to make the following recommendations:

- States should be accountable in implementing measures to ensure that private companies/corporations respect the UN DRIP and to comply with their corporate social responsibility – including the application of the FPIC in projects of corporations affecting indigenous peoples.
- States should establish an independent recourse mechanisms consistent with the UNDRIP.
- States should ensure that Indigenous Peoples rights are respected in the Climate Change agreements, strategies and measures at the global and national levels. The implementation of these safeguards shall be subjected to Monitoring Reporting and Verification (MRV).

Thank you Madam Chair