

Eighth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

The Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation

Speaker: Maily Kim

Item 3(c): Second International Decade of the Worlds Indigenous Peoples

Madame Chair

Vietnam has claimed that it has achieved the MDGs and yet our people continue to live in poverty, many are losing what is left of their ancestral homes because of the current economic recession which has meant that they are unable to sell their crops.

Very few Khmer-Krom people know about the existence of the MDGs in Vietnam. Thus we are very concerned that the MDGs will not be met if Vietnam continues to deny the existence of the Khmer Krom people as the indigenous peoples of the Mekong Delta.

We are encouraged that Vietnam has supported the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples. We believe it is time that we move forward and start the process of recognising the indigenous peoples of the Mekong Delta.

We would like to suggest the following recommendations:

- Ask that Vietnam develop a National plan of Action for the Second International Decade in collaboration with the indigenous Khmer Krom people and the Khmers Kampuchea- Krom Federation. We propose an initial meeting during this 8th session making it truly historic and also an honest and genuine shift for solidarity and social justice in Vietnam that could serve as a model for the ASEAN region*
- Ask that Vietnam incorporate a legal framework for the recognition of Khmer-Krom as the Indigenous Peoples into the National Plan of Action.*
- Ensure that the National Plan of Action addresses the current conflicts that exist between Vietnam and Khmer-Krom through traditional and modern conflict resolution mechanisms.*
- Request the help of the Permanent Forum to set up a parallel session in which Vietnam and KKF can have a dialogue to speak about Khmer-Krom issues and how we can work together to resolve them.*
- Seek the help of UN specialized agencies that are currently working in Vietnam such as CEDAW and UNESCO help monitor the current programs created by the government to ensure that it is culturally appropriate for the Khmer Krom people. For example, instead of creating more schools, we propose that UNESCO uses the existing educational institution that exists in Khmer Krom temples and offer bilingual classes so that Khmer Krom children can keep their identity.*

- *Ask that Vietnam work in collaboration with our indigenous organization and UN specialized agencies such as UNESCO and CEDAW to create a series of workshops to educate about their basic rights and fundamental freedoms including women's rights.*
- *Ask that CEDAW help create an indigenous Khmer Krom women center in the regional areas of the Mekong Delta so that they can access to support in health care, education and employment.*

In true Partnership for action and dignity, we reaffirm that the MDGs will only be successful in this second decade when unrecognised peoples such as our Khmer Krom are included in all decision making processes that affect them.

For six years, we have asked Vietnam to work with us and consult our Khmer Krom people back home. Let us stay true to the goal of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples and work together in a genuine partnership so that the Khmer Krom people can fully enjoy their basic rights without fear or discrimination.