

Statement by Kumar Yonjon Tamang, South Asia Region, International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests.

Agenda Item No.: Review of general development pertaining the situation of Indigenous Peoples.

Madame Chair,

My warm greeting to you.

On behalf of the South Asia Region of the International Alliance of Indigenous -Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests, I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Madame Chair,

South Asia consists of seven countries Nepal, India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Sri-Lanka and Pakistan where more than hundreds million indigenous peoples are living under different kinds of governing rules and systems from absolute monarchy, military to democracy. It is very unfortunate that not a single country in the region has recognised the Indigenous Peoples' right to self-governance and the right to self-determination. The indigenous peoples in South Asia are deprived, marginalised and internally colonised.

Madame Chair,

I would like to express the concerns of the South Asian Indigenous and tribal peoples that the denial of democracy, free flow and access to information in Bhutan and rehabilitation of the innocent Sharchhokps to the government vacant lands in Southern Bhutan. We are also concerns over the non-implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, specially, with regard to the functioning of the land commission, rehabilitation of the returnee Jumma refugees and internally displaced Jummas and withdrawal of military forces from the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Similarly, I would like to draw your attention to the anti-indigenous peoples' forest and protected areas policy of both Indian and Nepali Governments and displacement of indigenous and tribal peoples by big hydro dams including the Joint Forest Management Programme funded by the World Bank. We call upon the Government of India to demonstrate the greater will and creativity to resolve the protracted Indo-Naga problem. Specially, about the militarisation and imposition of Armed Forces Speical (Powers) Act, 1958 in the North-East India, sexual assualt on tribal women across India and the impunity given by the Government of India for such abuses. We welcome the recently reached agreement between the Government of India and the NSCN to extend the cease-fire. We also urge both the parties to engage in dialogue to seek peaceful resolution of the more than fifty years' war and to restore normal life and peace in the region.

Madame Chair,

The indigenous peoples and minorities in Nepal are also the victims of racial discrimination, Hindu caste System and religious fundamentalism for many centuries. Still Nepal is Hindu Kingdom by the Constitution of Nepal 1991. The state has denied the language rights of the indigenous peoples in Nepal after the Supreme Court of Nepal gave an order in June 1999 prohibiting use of local languages. To repeal the Court decision, Nepal Tamang Ghedung and Newa Rastriya Aandolan are preparing draft Private language Bill to bring at the current session of the parliament.

Similarly, indigenous nationalities are the main victims of the Maoist Peoples' war, bonded labour and women trafficking in Nepal. The Government is sending military to the affected areas by the People's War Group with the package of "Integrated Development and the Security Project 2001". The project is no more than the war against the rebellions. We call upon His Majesty's Government of Nepal to demonstrate the necessary political will to resolve the problems, specially, on the Maoist War which has caused more than 1700 people's death during the last five year. We urge both the Maoist People's War Group and the Government of Nepal to engage in dialogue to resolve the issues and to avoid the violation of human rights of indigenous peoples and the rest of the population in the country.

Mr. Chairman,

Recently, His Majesty's Government of Nepal has introduced the Public Security regulation 2001, which curtails the constitutional and Human rights of Nepalese citizens and the people. PSR will have negative effects in asserting the indigenous peoples' rights. The PSR is against the aspiration of the peoples' movement of Nepal, democratic values, human rights as enshrined in universal declaration and the present constitution of Nepal. That's why Nepali people are fighting against it under the banner of united forum 'Save the Democratic Rights Movement, Nepal' since four weeks. Indigenous peoples also have filed writ petition at the Supreme Court of Nepal to repeal the regulation. We call upon the Government of Nepal to withdraw such repressive and undemocratic laws and restore the fundamental freedoms and human rights of the people in Nepal.

In closing, I strongly urge all that right to self-determination and self-governance of the indigenous peoples should be respected in their respective countries as a conflict resolution measure.

Thank you, Chair.

Kumar Yonjan Tamang