



MYANMAR

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Statement by Ms.Khin Thandar, First Secretary,
Permanent Mission of Myanmar to the United Nations
Item 4(b): Environment

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, may I express our thanks to you and to the members of the Permanent Forum for all the efforts you have made in the past year for the improvement of the life of indigenous people around the world.

We have repeatedly mentioned that Myanmar ,being a nation at the crossroads of Asia's ancient civilizations and a country with numerous rivers, flowing from north to south, have made us a natural highway for migrating people, throughout the centuries. Many groups have passed through Myanmar and many have chosen to stay and call Myanmar their home. Thus, Myanmar is home to over 135 ethnic races, which we call our national races. All are given the honour and status of being indigenous .

Mr. Chairman,

The land, the water and the forests are crucial for everybody, for food, water and fuel. This is true even more so for indigenous people since there is also the spiritual needs. In Myanmar, almost 50% of the land is covered with forests, 85% of the national forest estate is closed forest and 15% is ranked degraded. On global terms, the country holds 70% of the world's remaining teak(*Tectona grandis*) resources. Our forests have thrived over the centuries because the people have looked upon the forests not just as a source of resources but also a source of spiritual and social needs.

Gazetted forest reserves cover 14.8% of the total land area in Myanmar. In Myanmar plantation forestry has emerged as an important programme within the forestry sector for rehabilitating degraded lands.

This programme has been implemented since 1980 with an annual planting of around 33,000 hectares. Myanmar is a party to the UN Framework Convention on climate change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol for Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Convention on International Trade in endangered species of wild flora and fauna .

The Myanmar National Commission for Environmental Affairs(NCEA) was established in 1990 to advise the government on environmental affairs; and to promote environmentally sound and sustainable development in Myanmar. It serves as a co-ordinating agency for collaborating between government departments relating to environment. The NCEA was instrumental in the formulation of Myanmar's National Environment Policy in 1994 and Myanmar agenda 21 in 1997 which underscores the strategic course for Myanmar to promote and sustain the overall development in the country.The Commission also spearheads a grassroots movement that plants 11 million tree saplings per year, to ensure that Myanmar stays green for its future generations. In order to strengthen co-ordination of environment affairs, the Government has recently setup a Ministerial level Environment Conservation Committee.

Mr.Chairman,

Equally important as flora is fauna. In the past year, the entire Hukawng Valley, with an area of 8,400 square miles has been formally declared as a natural reserve for conservation of tigers, making it the world's largest tiger reserve. Myanmar has been cooperating with international societies to make the Hukawng Valley Tiger Reserve a model of large-scale, landscape conservation , where both tigers and humans can benefit from careful protection and management of natural resources.

Mr.Chairman,

As I have mentioned earlier, Myanmar is a Union of 135 national races, all of whom are indigenous to the country. Looking after our environment, benefits all the national races. The government is also implementing a development programme that will benefit all the people. It has also been implementing a development programme of the border areas and for the national races in order to narrow the development gap between the national races residing in the border areas and elsewhere. It also implements as a matter of priority a sustained programme of promoting and protecting the rights of women in Myanmar. We are dismayed that a number of NGO's have during this Forum tried to misuse

this meeting by making politically motivated and unsubstantiated allegations.

Some NGO's are, once again, indulging in the litany of allegations concerning violence against women in the Shan and other States. Their sweeping allegations are unfounded and devoid of any credibility. The National Intelligence Bureau, the Police Force and the Special Branch carried out comprehensive investigations into those allegations. The Representatives of the Myanmar National Committee for Women Affairs(MNCWA) also conducted thorough investigations into further cases of allegations. The findings of these investigations have been transmitted to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights(OHCHR), the Special Rapporteur on the situation on Human Rights in Myanmar as well as to the thematic Special Rapporteurs. These replies from the Myanmar Government have been reflected in the relevant documents of the Sixtieth Session of the Commission on Human Rights.

Those allegations by some NGO's that rape has been used as a weapon are nothing but a travesty of truth. Never has it been the policy of the Government to allow or condone such a crime whether it is committed by a civilian or a member of the Armed Forces. On the contrary, woman are held in high esteem by the Myanmar society.

Mr.Chairman,

In conclusion , we wish the Third session of this Forum a successful outcome .

I Thank you Mr. Chairman.
