

**Statement made by Neingulo Krome, Secretary General of the Naga Peoples
Movement for Human Rights during the 14th Session of the United Nations
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues held at the United Nations
Headquarters at New York on April 27, 2015.**

Madam Chair, distinguished members of the Permanent Forum, fellow delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I bring warm greetings from Kohima, the capital city of Nagaland, where the last battle of World War II was fought and which was followed by the formation of the United Nations to save humankind from the "scourge of war". I make this reference as a reminder because there is still something worse than war that is prevailing in this part of the world which the United Nations is aware of, but unable to do much to correct the situation. When I say this, I am talking about the prevalence of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, which was mentioned a couple of time last Friday by some delegates. This Act gives sweeping powers to the Security Forces to "shoot to kill" any person and "arrest without warrant" any person, with full impunity in the North Eastern states of India and Jammu & Kashmir which is also now one of the most debated issues amongst various sections of people in India for several years now.

Against the backdrop of the imposition of this AFSPA in 1958 and the subsequent rampant and heinous violations of human rights committed on Nagas by Indian Security Forces with full impunity, the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court of India in 1982, challenging the very Constitutional validity of this act which the Supreme Court took up for hearing only after 15 years in July 1997. However, after hearing the petition and arguing over the appeal for the repealing of this Act for two full weeks, the Supreme Court of India upheld the Act, saying "the Act in itself is good".

Madam Chair, the debate has now gone far beyond the confines of the Court of Laws and people from all walks of life in India are now debating over this including in the print and electronic media. Some State Governments have also openly sounded their serious concerns and have suggested the lifting of

this Draconian law. Even some of the Special Rapporteurs of the United Nations have visited some of the AFSPA affected areas and strongly recommended for the repeal of this laws which has already been highlighted in this forum during the 11th Session in May 2012. In fact, owing to many compelling reasons from every angle, the Government of India too set up an Inquiry Committee called the Jeevan Reddy Committee in 2004 which submitted its report in 2005, strongly recommending for the repealing of this Act with a conclusion that the Act ***“for whatever reason, has become a symbol of oppression, an object of hate and an instrument of discrimination and high-handedness. It added that a procedure “established by Law” that claims to be fair, just and reasonable should not have become a symbol of oppression”.***

Therefore, without much more Ado, I take this opportunity to urge the Permanent Forum to take cognizance of this issue and prevail upon the Government of India to repeal this Act to make this world more humane, which is already under such a mess when we look at the level of violence and intolerance that is strangulating this Global Village. By doing this, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will be doing a great favour to India in particular as it is caught in between choosing the popular demand for lifting this Act which will be going by the dictates of its own conscience and the resistance of a powerful few to remove the Act. And I wish to conclude this statement by quoting the writings on the epitaph of the fallen soldiers of World War II at the Kohima War Cemetery which says; ***“When you go home tell them of us and say for your tomorrow. We gave our today”*** and to say let us at least honour their prayer and give our present and upcoming generation a better world to live in and not like the ones we and the elder generations had to live through.

Thank You Madam Chair.