

Sixteenth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
Item 4: Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the  
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
Joint Statement of Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation  
and Khmer Kampuchea Krom Temple  
Speaker: Thida Chau

Madame Chairperson:

On behalf of my people, the indigenous Khmer-Krom of South Vietnam and the Mekong Delta, thank you for allowing me to speak today.

All over the world we can see from the Secretariat's report, the one common denominator to those successful implementation stories are grounded in the legal recognition of the *Indigenous People* in States' constitution and incorporation of that recognition into other legal frameworks.

Ten years since the adoption of the UNDRIP, the IPs & Khmer-Krom people in Vietnam still do not have this legal recognition and protection. Legal status and recognition provide very important protection for indigenous people and is crucial for the implementation of UNDRIP. Our right to self-identification cannot be ignored.

- Right now in Preah Trapeang Province at Wat Mepang temple<sup>1</sup>, our community is confronting a violation of article 25 of the UNDRIP, where with backing from local authority, some citizens have squatted on sacred land and have continuously obstructed the religious rights and celebration of the indigenous peoples. Legal recognition would provide our communities protection and rights to our traditional land and ensure proper conflict-resolutions centering on rights of indigenous people as written in the UNDRIP. The government must step in to provide resolution that respects the rights and sanctity of our sacred land as well as the dignity of the other party involved.
- In our 2016 report<sup>2</sup> to the Special Rapporteur on field of Cultural Rights On the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage we highlighted several instances of destruction or neglect on indigenous heritage such as the symbolic Khmer-Krom entrance gate to the province of Preah Trapeang (Vietnam). The supposed Khmer-style architecture to be replacing the demolished gate still remains to be seen.

From our temples, to our architecture, to the sacred ponds, to the lands and the very people who inhabits and protect them - our indigenous communities need the UNDRIP. Its awareness must be practiced into local level of government and used as basis of new legal frameworks to help protect indigenous people. As other Member states moves forwards in its recognition of indigenous people and implementation of the UNDRIP, our indigenous communities in Vietnam remains unrecognized.

It is time to move forward. We are here for the dialogue and eager to work with all parties and UN mechanisms in order to ensure our indigenous community are also included in the implementations and benefits of the UNDRIP.

Thank you Madam Chair.