

**Sixth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
14-25 May 2007 at UN Headquarters, New York City  
Delegation: Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation**

**Special Theme: Territories, Lands and Natural Resources  
Speaker: Romy Thach**

Madame Chair,

We would like to congratulate you on your reelection as chair of the UNPFII. We also would like to thank you for visiting our community in exile at the temple in Cambodia in February. Our people that have been forced from our homelands were pleased to meet a member of the international community that cares about our struggle for self-determination.

We will begin with recommendations to ensure our connection to our sacred homelands in the face of dire circumstances denying our identity.

- KKF seeks the assistance of the United Nations mechanisms for conflict prevention and reconciliation to encourage Vietnam's recognition of the Khmer Krom people as the indigenous peoples of Mekong Delta of Vietnam. Without doing so, we feel that Vietnam does not fully appreciate the importance of land for the basic survival of the Khmer Krom people.
- Request the assistance of IOM to work with the Vietnam government to initiate programs to resolve land claims and ensure that the indigenous Khmer Krom people are compensated for their lost of farmlands as well as a return to own land. There are many land claims since 1970. Ask for return of our ancestral lands and properties that were unlawfully taken away by the State and by the Vietnamese newcomers.
- Ask that Vietnam adopt a national act to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples in Vietnam to their traditional lands and territories specifically the Khmer Krom people as the indigenous peoples linked historically and spiritually to the Mekong Delta. Create and implement non-discriminatory indigenous land laws that respect and protects the lands of the Khmer Krom people and prevent further acts of illegal land grabbing by Vietnamese authorities.
- Ask that IFAD fund a project to allow Khmer Krom farmers to return to their fields to produce traditional foods for their community. Canal projects that allow salt water into fresh water rice farming area must be stopped immediately to avoid destroying more of Khmer Krom's land.
- Request the assistance of UNITAR to provide essential training for the Asia region to enhance conflict resolutions and peace building capabilities between governments and indigenous peoples.
- Seek the assistance of UNDP to promote and ensure that the indigenous peoples are presented in all decision making for positive programs focusing on reaching the UN Millennium Development Goals for the Khmer people
- Seek the support of international agencies such as FAO and WHO to provide assistance to examine polluted land to determine its source that has caused thousands of blind farmers and to return the farmers to their traditional land to provide the fundamental nutrition for our peoples. Ask that Vietnam start implementing more effective local systems of monitoring the use of pesticides and their damage to the ecosystem in our homeland.

- Ask that UNESCO help preserve the sacred sites for all of humanity to share under the UNESCO World Heritage program. One of the first locations that immediately needs protection to preserve Sambua Rangsey temple which was built in 373AD at Tra Khao commune, Hoa An Village, Cau Ke district, Tra Vinh province.
- Billions of dollars of profit from oil and natural gas extraction in our homeland and our sea at Ocap (renamed Vung Tau) province must cease, going to the multinational corporations and corrupt state agencies and develop a program that ensures the collective economic well being of the Khmer communities' standard of living.
- Ask that Vietnam start recognize and implement the policy of free, prior and informed consent when implementing programs that encourages participation and consultation with the local Khmer-Krom on all future development projects which take place in their homeland.

Madame Chair, we are convinced that the above measures will improve the living conditions of the Khmer Krom people living under extreme poverty. Such recommendations will help Vietnam achieve Millennium Development goals.

Lastly, we would like to reaffirm our support for the adoption of the Declaration on Rights of the Indigenous Peoples.

Thank you.