Thank you, Madame Chairperson, for the opportunity for the Asia Indigenous Peoples Caucus to speak and submit our proposal for the future work of the Forum.

In Asia, indigenous peoples’ rights to a life of peace and security, free from violence are increasingly threatened by the escalation of human rights violations due to corporate operations especially by extractive industries coupled more often than not with militarization of indigenous communities. This is exacerbated by the criminalization of indigenous leaders and indigenous peoples human rights defenders when asserting their rights to their lands, territories and resources.

Moreover, many governments in Asia are implementing National Security Laws and launched anti-insurgency operation plans that have impacted heavily on the peace and security of indigenous peoples. In recent years, many indigenous communities and their leaders have been subject to attacks, harassments and extrajudicial killings as a result of these operation plans. Indigenous peoples who assert their rights over their lands, territories and resources are either vilified or attacked for their opposition or are also tagged as supporters of armed groups fighting their governments.

In addition, remote areas where indigenous peoples in Asia reside are usually affected by armed conflicts between government forces and armed groups. The result of massive military operations and campaigns of the government forces often result to massive evacuations of indigenous communities for long periods of time, disrupting the communities’ socio-economic practices leaving them with scarce sources of food and shelter, and general insecurity. Also, efforts in peace-building between governments and armed groups often exclude indigenous peoples.

Further, many indigenous communities in Asia reside in areas declared as national parks where the military is used to drive them out of their communal lands and territories. Many indigenous communities are likewise situated and divided by international borders which hamper the development of contacts, relations and cooperation, including activities for spiritual, cultural, economic and social purposes, with their own members on the other side of the border.

We therefore recommend to the Forum to consider the theme of peace and security in indigenous peoples territories for its future work.

In closing, we, again reiterate our request for increased engagement and participation of states from Asia. We encourage states to take serious efforts in building relationships with its indigenous peoples at the national, regional and global levels to address our issues and concerns.

Thank you.