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15th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, UNHQ

Agenda Item 5: “Indigenous Peoples: Conflict, Peace and Resolution”

Dear Chair, I am Jiten Yumnam, representing Centre for Research and Advocacy, Manipur and CSCHR, Manipur. I am taking this honor to inform and update that India's North East States comprising the states of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim is inhabited by more than 200 indigenous peoples in overlapping territories.

India's North East region is afflicted with armed conflict situation, with several indigenous communities striving for their self-determination, ranging from full sovereignty to greater political autonomy, especially in Manipur, Nagaland, Assam, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya. There are peace resolution initiatives of the Government of India with several indigenous peoples' movements for self-determination. However, a key challenge of the peace building in Government of India's conditionalities under its constitution and also the lack of a comprehensive, transparent and participatory peace resolution process. The overlapping nature of indigenous peoples inhabitation in India's NE hence warrants an inclusive peace processes, within and among indigenous communities in NE region. A clear lack of holistic and comprehensive peace building with the participation of indigenous peoples in overlapping territories, has led to much confusion, tensions and conflict among indigenous peoples. And indeed, peace buildings are often pursued as part of the State's continued efforts for country insurgency.

Another challenges to peace building among indigenous communities is the Government of India's military responses to indigenous peoples self-determination processes, enacting emergency laws, such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 (AFSPA). These emergency laws facilitate intense militarization in indigenous leading to rampant human rights violations. The militarization process also constitutes an additional source of conflict. The Justice Jeevan Reddy Commission, established by the Government of India in the wake of the peoples resistance to the rape and murder of Miss Thangjam Manorama on 11 July 2004 concluded and observed that the “AFSPA has become a symbol of oppression, an object of hate and an instrument of discrimination and highhandedness”.

The continued onslaught on indigenous peoples land, territories and resources both by the State and corporate bodies in India's North East, including Manipur for mega dams, oil exploration, and mining and infrastructure projects, facilitated by ADB, World Bank etc will worsen human rights violations. Big dams, oil exploration and the associated corruption and manipulations have led to much tension and conflict. The lack of accountability and the tacit support of the State in the corporate expansion in indigenous peoples while undermining their rights further deepened conflict and tension in indigenous peoples land and territories. Such development process associated with militarization compelled indigenous peoples to resort to all means for their survival and to defend their land and territories.

Mr. Chair, the infusion of non-indigenous population in indigenous territories as part of undermining our undermining our right to self-determination and also in promoting large scale unsustainable development projects has also led to land alienation, marginalization and conflict.

Recommendations: The CRAM and CSCHR would like to request the PFII to urge upon the Government of India to:

- Recognize indigenous peoples human rights, right to self-determination
- Adopt a political response to the Indo-Manipur armed conflict
- Undertake a comprehensive peace resolution process, inclusive of inter and intra communities based on full recognition of their human rights as per the UN DRIP.
- Desist from pursuance of mega development process in indigenous territories without taking the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples.
- Repeal all emergency laws, such as the Armed Forces Special Powers, Act, 1958 in India.
- Stop the infusion of non- indigenous population in Manipur without their FPIC consent.