

Agenda Item 4c: Health

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Third session

19 May 2004

Asian Indigenous Peoples' Caucus Statement

Presented by Lal Dawnsang Amlai



Respected chairman, my brothers, sisters and friends, the Asian Indigenous Peoples' Caucus deeply appreciates the focus on the issues of indigenous women this year. The situation of indigenous women and girls in Asia is extremely vulnerable due to multiple discriminations by virtue of sex and ethnicity. Many Asian States also continue to deny our existence as indigenous peoples in their territories. This is an enduring and outright discriminatory practice that violates our collective right to self-determination, threatening our health and survival.

We strongly support the issues raised and recommendations made by the international Committee on Indigenous Health. That the nodal agencies responsible for the health of women and girls have not as yet met their commitments nor have they at the Asian regional level, despite assurances engaged in dialogue with our peoples or representatives in order to decide on an implementation strategy of the Global policy on the health of Indigenous peoples demonstrates the disregard of our human rights without which health is not attainable, according to WHO itself.

We urge the Permanent Forum to review its recommendations at its second session relating to health many of which are concerned with urgent health concerns of indigenous women and girls in Asia. We feel that these recommendations must be reinforced and that WHO must be asked why it has not either followed up or reported progress on these recommendations.

In particular we would like the forum to give its attention to the following recommendations of the second session as per its report Economic and Social Council Official Records 2003 Supplement no 23 (E/2003/43 and E/C.19/2003/22).

- Section 4: Health Para 64 recommending the WHO and other concerned UN agencies to convene a workshop on indigenous health with particular emphasis on indigenous women and children
- Section 4: Health Para 65 recommending the Global Alliance for Vaccination initiatives (GAVI) and the UNDP to sponsor a workshop on immunisation and vaccination of indigenous women and children including the need for related safety protocols
- General recommendations under Section 4: Health Para 68-70 relating to the global policy, participatory research guidelines and disaggregated data on indigenous infant, children and mothers
- Environment/health/persistent organic pollutants related recommendations contained in recommendations Para 71-74
- Other specific issues under Section 4: health Paras 77-82 that particularly deal with violence against indigenous women, forced sterilisation, testing or trials of drugs and vaccines, genocidal and ethnocidal practices, armed conflict and war.

In addition, we recommend that the Permanent Forum:

- Urge States as well as UN agencies to establish the avenues and means for indigenous communities in Asia to access adequate and appropriate financial and technical assistance to set up and implement health care centers, with provision of adequate maternity health services, according to our own needs and cultures. And to support the implementation and access to international assistance and existing indigenous community-based organizations and support systems for the rape survivors and their community.
- Urge States and relevant UN agencies such as WHO to promote and protect indigenous peoples' traditional health systems, traditional medicinal knowledge and its practitioners.
- Urge States and relevant UN agencies to respect, affirm, protect and promote indigenous medicine and their production systems
- Urge States in Asia in the light of the increasing problem of the HIV/AIDS epidemic that threatens indigenous peoples, particularly in Myanmar (Burma), to take up immediate measures to halt all atrocities against indigenous women, such as rape and other forms of sexual abuse as a tool of military oppression.