

9th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
New York, 19-30 April 2010
Agenda Item 4: Human Rights

Statement by:

NAGA PEOPLES MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (NPMHR)

Endorsed by:

ASIA PACIFIC INDIGENOUS YOUTH NETWORK (APIYN)

Delivered by:

MR. ATHILI ANTHONY SAPRIINA

Thank you Chairperson,

Distinguished delegates of States, UN agencies, support groups, Indigenous sisters and brothers, the political conflict of the Nagas with India is among the oldest in the region spanning six decades and has cost many lives – Indians, Myanmarese and the Nagas.

Human Rights have no boundaries and include our ability to declare the realities of our situation to this gathering, despite the understanding that the Permanent Forum is not a complaint body. It is very difficult for us to be nice when we are faced with the question of survival.

India has reduced the Naga political issue as a law and order problem and convinced the rest of the world that “underdevelopment” is the chief cause of unrest and that “Development coupled with a deliberate and sustained assimilation” programme into the mainstream will bring lasting Peace. This legitimizes the destruction of Mother Earth in collusion with a section of Indigenous Peoples who have been co-opted by the state.

Chairperson, a ceasefire agreed upon by Nagaland and India in August 1997 has held despite a show of insincerity on India’s part. Now, while overt violent confrontation has lessened, the psychological gameplan of destroying our social fabric through a vilification and hate campaign among our communities is alarming. India asks us to unite while she devices ways to divide us.

Further, despite India supporting the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, she has done little to realize the intentions inscribed within this document primarily because India refuses to accept that Indigenous Tribal peoples deserve a better deal. We hope that India would

sit down and participate in the UNPFII and not being content to monitoring what the contingent from India does here.

Chairperson, the Naga peoples would also acknowledge the commitment of the Indian leaders with successive Prime Ministers pushing for reaching a negotiated settlement acceptable to both peoples. India faces very difficult questions and we respect that. Nagas wish to reiterate that we shall honour every commitment we made as we journey towards a peaceful settlement.

I put forth the following recommendations:

1. India must honour Article 3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and take bold steps in reaching a negotiated settlement with the Nagas.
2. That, India recognize that a physical and political integration of the Nagas from the four States of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Assam and Nagaland is the first step to sustainable and just peace.
3. We reiterate our call made during the 7th Session of UNPFII that India's multi-billion dollar counter insurgency operations using propaganda and the military in Naga areas be halted. That, India desist from interfering in the Reconciliation efforts emerging from within the Naga peoples, a people who were once divided by India.
4. India and Myanmar halt the joint military exercises against the Nagas and ensure that Article 36 of the UNDRIP be adhered.
5. That the World Bank, ADB, IFAD, UNDP and other agencies operating in Naga areas ensure that safeguard policies on Indigenous peoples be ensured. That, their engagement should not be confined to those Indigenous Peoples who work closely with the Indian State as they do not necessarily represent the true voice.
6. That, India to engage in constructive dialogue with tribal and indigenous peoples in India at the UNPFII and other related international forums so that we can together find ways to peaceful co-existence and mutual benefit.
7. That, the Human Rights (agenda item 4) which encompasses every agenda within the UNPFII, be allotted much more time, than it is now, during every session.

Thank you Chair.