

**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues****Joint Statement by the Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation and the Montagnard Foundation****Item 7: Urbanization and migration****Speaker: Sothy Kien**

Madame Chair,

Today's agenda focusing on specific region of Asia and theme of Urbanization is a great opportunity to meet the aspirations of this forum to increase positive dialogue between the actors to protect human rights in partnership and meet the MDGs for our people.

While we know we have differences with the government, we desire a dialogue. We will practice our spiritual beliefs of compassion to agree to the proposed meeting between Vietnam and KKF. We also agree with the inclusion of SR Stavenhagen as the government was responding to his report. If UNPFII chair Tauli-Corpuz can also assist, we believe we could arrange a series of dialogues that allow for us to return to the 7<sup>th</sup> UNPFII session with some positive direction to secure the fundamental freedoms in Asia, specifically in Kampuchea Krom of Vietnam.

Traditionally farmers, the rich fertile Mekong delta has provided an essential source of food and survival for the indigenous Khmer Krom people. Recent canals projects initiated by Vietnam authorities have destroyed much of the rice fields by channeling salt water into fresh water farming, forcing thousands to abandon their home and migrate to already crowded cities.

Like a domino affect, elevated levels of poverty, lack of education and landlessness has resulted in many indigenous women and young girls getting caught with trafficking rings and finding employment that violate their culture and traditional lifestyles.

We would like to recommend the following:

- Request that Vietnam consult indigenous peoples before creating canals projects on their ancestral lands by the use of free and informed consent.
- Ask Vietnam to adopt the ILO 169 Convention to ensure the protection of Khmer Krom and Degar people and in recognition of their vulnerability and poverty.
- Seek the assistance of UN-HABITAT to create initiatives to help provide adequate shelter and housing for homeless Khmer Krom and Montagnard.
- Seek the help of the International Land Coalition to work with Vietnam to create a committee composed of indigenous and State representatives to start talking about land rights.
- Ask that Vietnam establish and implement national laws to protect lands of indigenous peoples from further illegal land grabbing.
- Ask that Vietnam start taking serious and immediately actions to process land claims by indigenous peoples.

- Seek the help of Permanent Forum members to urge Vietnam to recognize the importance of the sacred homeland of Kampuchea Krom to the Khmer Krom people. Also, that Vietnam work in collaboration with UN agencies to recognize that the further taking of land results in the negative direction of indicators for the livelihood of indigenous peoples. Recognizing land and prevention of migration would assist Vietnam in reaching the 8 MDGs and also its obligation of human rights protection and promotion under international laws.

Madame Chair, it is our sincere hope that the Permanent Forum and the Vietnam government takes note of these recommendations and that today is the first day in which a series of dialogues can happen so that the voice of our peoples can be finally heard.