

**First Session of United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
13 – 24 May 2002
New York
Agenda Item 5: General Debate**

Speaker: Sirjana Subba (Limbu)
Organization: Association of Limbu Shamans

Thank you Mr. Chairperson

Honorable members of the Permanent Forum, members of government delegations, indigenous brothers and sisters, friends and colleagues.

My name is Sirjana Subba and I come from Limbu people. I take this opportunity to speak on behalf of my people.

First of all, I would like to congratulate all indigenous brothers and sisters for the establishment of the Permanent Forum and I would also like to congratulate you Mr. Chairperson on your appointment. I would like to thank the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations for making my participation possible in this forum.

The establishment of the Permanent Forum has given us a ray of hope. The hope – we will have the earth under our feet when we stand, fresh air when we breathe, and life to live with dignity and pride. The dream that our elders have had now has turned into reality. All our faith and trust lies on the members of the Permanent Forum and we pledge our full support to them.

Mr. Chairperson

I do not want to make this forum as a complaint box, but I want to address some of the issues related to the Adivashi/Janajati (i.e. indigenous peoples/nationalities) of Nepal. Nepal is running under a state of emergency and our fundamental freedoms are suspended. At this stage, we the Adivashi/Janajati, are suffering the most. Our lives are under threat due to armed conflict between the government and insurgent militia. Adivashi/Janajati are either forcefully recruited in the insurgent militia or killed at an alarming rate by the Army personnel. We are in the trap of both

sides. The cross firing situation between insurgents and Army personnel of the government brings about massive destruction to indigenous peoples. Forced migration and its consequences has brought in a desperate situation among the Adivashi/Janajati in Nepal. Similarly, our rights, such as freedom of association, freedom of speech, and freedom of expression have are being denied.

Mr. Chairperson

In the name of national unity, our language, our culture, and our religion are discriminated against by the constitution. Our native languages do not have the same status as Khas Nepali language, and the religious practices that we have been performing for centuries are not recognized. In such situation, it is hard for us to live a dignified life with our distinct identity as peoples.

Mr. Chairperson

After giving a brief description of the present issues of Adivashi/Janajatis of Nepal, I would like to recommend a few points through this Forum.

1. I would like to request United Nations and its specialized agencies and the international community through this Forum to take initiatives to bring the two forces into a dialogue and bring peace in my country.
2. We encourage Permanent Forum to conduct studies with special reference to indigenous peoples where armed conflict has destructed the lives of indigenous peoples.
3. Since, we indigenous peoples of the world share the same history of marginalization and discrimination. I ask the UN family to make a new history of equity and equality for all.
4. Youth and children are our present and our future, and I urge this forum to focus on the indigenous youth and children to make this world a better place to live.
5. I would also ask this Forum to take initiatives to support the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples before the end of the Decade of the Indigenous Peoples.

At the end, I wish all indigenous brothers and sisters best wishes for joining UN family.

Thank you Mr. Chair

5. That the PFIH in paper and spirit and human rights education in their national education policy & curricula
6. Encourage those govt.² who do not recognize ips to recognize ips & their rights. especially Asian govt.