

5<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
United Nations Headquarters, New York  
May 15-26 2006

Agenda Item : 4c

Statement by Ina Hume  
On behalf of the Asian Indigenous Peoples Caucus  
On Indigenous Women and Children

The situation faced by many indigenous women and children remains critical in several of the Asian countries represented here at the Permanent Forum. This is due to ongoing conflict, militarization and exploitation of natural resources on their ancestral lands. We support the recommendations of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Caucus on Human Rights and the Indigenous Women's Caucus on Women on indigenous children, youth and women.

The issue of lack of relevant and specific qualitative and quantitative data relating to their needs and aspirations still needs to be addressed if meaningful progress is to be made towards their participation in achieving the MDGs for their communities. They remain the most disenfranchised of their communities facing double discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and gender, with their voices unheard by the development sector. However, indigenous women are not a uniform homogenous group with the same needs, opportunities or aspirations, but encompass a wide variety of experiences.

The lands of indigenous people in Asia are resource rich and often strategically important. This has led to the militarization of indigenous lands. This militarization has led to an alarming increase in gender based violence in these regions. I would like to highlight, that rape when perpetrated or condoned by an agent of the State constitutes Torture, and is therefore prohibited by provisions on torture and a host of human rights and humanitarian law protections.

Rape and sexual violence targeting indigenous women and girls has long been employed by military in Bangladesh, Burma, India and Nepal. These are not sexual crimes, but a systematic and brutal policy that targets indigenous women as a weapon of war, torture and subjugation against the whole community. It is both extremely worrying and ironic that Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Nepal, with histories of violating the rights of indigenous people, and gender based violence are among the top five contributors to UN Peacekeeping missions. These four countries made up over 44% of all UN Peacekeeping personnel for April 2006. The lucrative foreign revenue this brings in helps to support and perpetuate the militarization on indigenous lands in Asia. I have a number of detailed practical recommendations for the PFII to raise with Peacekeeping which I will submit in my written report.

Rather than make new recommendations we ask for the following regarding their implementation of the previous recommendations to this forum:

- The Permanent Forum should develop mechanisms to review and monitor the implementation of the recommendations contained in the reports of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sessions of the PFII on indigenous women, children and youth. In order to achieve this, agencies need to ensure the active participation of women and children in these review and monitoring mechanisms. Innovative methods to disaggregate the situation of these groups from within their own communities is also essential as their visions may also be different from that of their male counterparts. This is essential of the rights and issues of indigenous women and children are to be mainstreamed into UN agencies and member states.
- PFII shall facilitate the monitoring of implementation of projects and policies on indigenous peoples and request UN agencies, governments and indigenous peoples to submit progress reports on the implementation of recommendations contained in the reports of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sessions of the PFII. Funding and resources need to be made available directly to community groups in order to submit such progress reports. This can be channeled through the Regional Indigenous Peoples Programme (RIPP).
- We call upon the Committee of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to implement the recommendations made by the Permanent Forum at its 3<sup>rd</sup> session to organize a meeting, in collaboration with indigenous women, UNIFEM, UNESCO and UNDP, with the objective of beginning a process to develop and adopt a general recommendation on indigenous women.
- We urge member states to take special measures for promoting gender equality and empowerment of indigenous women. Special quotas or reservations should be made for indigenous women in education, government job, non-agricultural sector, civil services etc. Member states should report back to next years Forum as to the representation of indigenous women within various sectors. This should also include the reservation of special seats for indigenous women representatives, at local and national government levels. There is a real lack of participation of women in decision making over issues affecting their lives and livelihoods, and this imbalance needs to be redressed.
- As a first step a lead UN agency should be assigned to take on this role. Resources should be committed by the UN agencies, multinational financial institutions and member states.
- In the case of Asia, such a mechanism exists, with the recent establishment of a UNDP Regional Indigenous People Programme, with a lead coordinator who is an indigenous woman. The RIPP should also be established in other regions and appropriate resources allocated to facilitate indigenous peoples policies for development into UN agencies and ensure equity among the regions.

I would like to make the following recommendations to improve both the accountability of military personnel and of UN Peacekeepers, as we see this as two sides of the same ugly coin:

- We reiterate the recommendation of the 4<sup>th</sup> session of the PFII that the DPKO develop a policy on indigenous peoples with the active participation and in consultation with indigenous peoples.

On a practical level we would like to recommend the following:

Prior to deployment on UN Peacekeeping missions:

- The DPKO should screen and monitor the human rights records of contingents (only certain categories are currently screened) to ensure military and civilian personnel in countries with a history of human rights abuse are not deployed on peacekeeping missions
- The database of human rights abusers or 'blacklist' being developed by DPKO should be open to contributions from indigenous peoples and human rights groups with experience and evidence of human rights abuses
- Finally, we urge the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to carry out a study on the issue of violence against women perpetrated by peacekeepers with the participation of indigenous women and communities

Thank you Madame Chair