

**8th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

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**United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland**

**Agenda Item No. 8. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)**

**Delivered by: Mr. Pankaj Teron**

Kardom!

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am Pankaj Teron, representing Karbi indigenous people and Karbi Human Rights Watch (KHRW) from Northeast India.

We have experienced discrimination and exclusion like other tribal/indigenous peoples around the world. Therefore, we deeply appreciate and welcome the steps taken for the proper implementation of UNDRIP by the states and their continued commitment through the WCIP Outcome Document. At the country level the initiative taken by our government to address the grievances of the Scheduled Tribes (Indigenous Peoples) and the adoption of various mechanisms to promote and protect is a positive step.

I would like to draw particular attention to OP 3 and 4 of the WCIP outcome document where states have reaffirmed their commitment to UNDRIP, particularly the right to FPIC. However, and despite these positive developments, indigenous peoples continue to face serious threat and challenges especially on their rights to their lands, territories & resources (LTR) and the non respect of their right to Free, Prior & Informed Consent (FPIC).

Mr. Chair, may I draw particular attention of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) to the situation in my land, that is Karbi Anglong, Assam, Northeast India, where Indigenous communities are being evicted to make way for Wildlife Sanctuaries, Tiger Reserve Project, Elephant corridors and most importantly, declaration of Eco-Sensitive Zones in their traditional lands and territories. These projects are being implemented without FPIC. As a result, more than 150 villages are going to be affected. Aside from these, extractives industries in North Cachar Hills of Assam, India are also operating without FPIC. The state and corporations have been able to implement and propose all these projects because indigenous peoples lack awareness of processes and remedies that they can seek, particularly within the UN. What I would like to stress here is that there is a disconnect between what is happening within various UN processes for indigenous peoples and the reality that indigenous peoples are facing on the ground.

Such experiences are common to Indigenous Peoples around the globe. It is in

this context that I would like to urge the Human Rights Council through the EMRIP the followings-

1. To launch and reinforce awareness programs to promote the UNDRIP in the local, national and regional level with the states.
2. To set up an effective means to monitor the implementation of the UNDRIP in every level by the states at the national level through constitutional provisions, enabling laws and programme development and implementation among others.
3. To strongly monitor the activities of the business enterprises to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Last but not the least here I would like to convey my sincere thanks and gratitude to UN Voluntary Fund for providing me the opportunity to attend this 8<sup>th</sup> session of EMRIP.

Kur-Eh-Vang!

Thank you Mr. Chair.