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**First Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
New York, May 20, 2002**

Agenda Item 5 – General Statement

Statement by Jannie Lasimbang, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact



Mr. Chairman, AIPP would like to draw your attention to the alarming increase of militarisation in many parts of Asia. Militarisation in indigenous peoples' areas is the root cause of various forms of human rights violation. Using draconian laws and acts such as the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and declaring areas as "Disturbed Areas" in North East India, military rule in Bangladesh, or State of Emergency in Nepal, acts of violence by the military are legitimized.

Indigenous peoples in militarised areas are being subjected to torture, rape, forced labor, arbitrary killings, extortion, and arbitrary seizure of their property and livestock. Systematic forced relocation of villages by the military has led to massive displacement of peoples who have lost means of earning a living as well as the destruction of crops and livestock. Many indigenous peoples are forced to become refugees, while others flee to other areas within the country. For example in Burma alone, more than one million are classified as internally displaced persons, and hundreds of thousands are refugees in other countries. Starvation, malnutrition, and death from contagious diseases are common among the internally displaced.

Women and children suffer most in such a situation. Not only are they mentally affected by the condition in which they are forced to endure but they also vulnerable to physical reprisal by the military to inflame indigenous communities.

In militarized areas for example in Northeast India, Bangladesh, Burma, Indonesia, Nepal and Philippines, economic and social development takes a back seat. Disruption in the social lives of indigenous peoples as a result of militarisation leads to the loss of their traditional way of life and the passing down of their traditional systems to the next generation.

The Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact would like to make the following recommendations to the Permanent Forum on the issue of Militarisation:-

1. That the Forum forms a Working Group on Militarisation that would hold specialized consultations with indigenous peoples and advise the Forum on such matter;
2. To request UN bodies, in particular the Commission on Human Rights to step up efforts to promote and protect human rights in indigenous areas in Asia;
3. To request UN Agencies and Programmes working in countries in Asia where militarisation is used in indigenous peoples' areas, to ensure that funds allocated for development are not in anyway used for supporting the expansion of the military or military activities; and
4. To recommend to ECOSOC to pass a resolution for the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on "Militarisation in Indigenous Peoples Areas".

Mr. Chairman, members of the Permanent Forum, the Asia indigenous peoples present in this Forum are also concerned that very few government representatives, particularly from Asia are present here. We recommend that special efforts be made to encourage governments to participate actively in the Forum.

Thank you, Kotohuan.

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