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Asia Indigenous Peoples Caucus

Agenda Item 7: Urban Migration

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Madame Chair

Like other part of the world, Indigenous Peoples of Asia have been forced to migrate in the urban areas for various reasons. Indigenous peoples of Northeast India, Myanmar, Philippines among others, are being forcibly displaced due to militarization and consequently migrated to urban areas. Similarly the internal conflicts many indigenous communities and incidence of natural disasters are major reasons for urban migration of indigenous peoples. Further, the centralization of basic services and infrastructures in urban centers also compel certain indigenous peoples to migrate to urban areas to have access to these basic services. Further, the lack of livelihood support, absence of educational institutions and health services in indigenous homelands are key factors for urban migration of indigenous peoples.

As more and more indigenous peoples migrate to urban centers, there are alarming developments relating to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of indigenous migrants. The serious impacts of the urban migration of indigenous peoples include worsening forms of discrimination, exclusion, loss of language and culture, identity crisis, abuse of women marginalization and poor access to the resources and services. Most of the poor indigenous migrants end up even poorer and marginalized in urban areas as they end up as slum dwellers or squatters with very poor access to basic services and livelihood.

Likewise, social problems such as alcoholism, gambling, and other vices are becoming prevalent among indigenous peoples in urban areas. A major reason for such is the absence of community cohesion and cooperation in urban areas as indigenous peoples are very dispersed and are basically left to fend for themselves as families and not as communities. Clearly, a serious implication of urban migration of indigenous peoples in the weakening and erosion of their socio-cultural systems as indigenous peoples and their collectively is further eroded.

Of particular concern as consequence of urban migration of indigenous peoples is the increasing cases and vulnerability of indigenous children to child labor practices and sexual abuse. Indigenous families in urban centers with poor access to sustainable livelihoods are increasingly pushed to allow child labor practices if only to meet their daily needs. Likewise, a growing number of indigenous children involve in child labor are also even more vulnerable to sexual abuse and anti-social vices such as drugs and alcoholism.

Madame Chair, in this context, we wish to put forward our recommendations:

- For the Permanent Forum to conduct survey and study on impact of indigenous peoples migration to urban areas especially youth and women and collect data of urban IPS for implementation of appropriate social, economical support and assistance for indigenous migrants.
- For the Permanent Forum to request the International Labor Organization- 169 project (ILO-169) to give special attention to studies and interventions in relation to child labor issues of indigenous peoples as urban migrants.
- For the Permanent Forum to recommend the creation of a fund for indigenous education and restore indigenous knowledge and other skills to support indigenous migrants in urban centers.
- For the Permanent Forum to call on governments to create or establish indigenous peoples centers in urban areas to address the legal status and medical condition of indigenous peoples, as well as providing other forms of assistance to indigenous migrants.
- For the Permanent Forum, in coordination with concerned UN agencies to conduct focus studies on the trafficking of indigenous women and children to urban centers.
- For the Permanent Forum to call on governments to provide mechanisms for displaced indigenous communities to be able to return to their original communities, including appropriate forms of compensations and restitution and provisions for sustainable livelihoods of displaced indigenous peoples.

Thank you madame Chair, and we hope that our recommendations be given due consideration and appropriate action.