

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 12th Session
Item 6: Country engagement
Khmers-Kampuchea Krom Federation
Speaker: Licia Tran

Dear Madame Chairperson,

On behalf of the millions voiceless Khmer Krom people living in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to be present at this 12th session of EMRIP.

As stated in the HR Council resolution 33/25, the Expert Mechanism should, upon request, assist Member States and/or Indigenous Peoples in providing technical advice on the development of domestic legislation and policies related to the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Yet, there are still many laws promoting specific policies that give rise to prejudice against our people.

As the Indigenous people of the Mekong Delta, the Khmer-Krom people have lived on their ancestral lands for thousand years, however the current government of Vietnam has not shown any results in protecting and promoting the fundamental rights for our people, such as the right to preserve their self-identity, language and culture; the right to freedom of speech, religion and belief; the right to equal education and the right to health.

We would very much welcome the input from EMRIP to facilitate a constructive conversation leading to technical advice for the acknowledgment of our right to self-identify as indigenous peoples, and to peacefully exercise our rights enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Since its adoption, we must strongly recommend that countries affirm to the Declaration and implement measures that promote the rights and the protection of indigenous peoples.

Member states in the Asia region claim to support “the spirit” of the UN DRIP, only by recognizing indigenous peoples in the regions of other member states. This enables member states to distance themselves from being a part of the active participation with indigenous peoples and, thus, an open dialogue is unlikely to happen.

We encourage these member states to look at the ones that have already recognized their indigenous peoples and to take them as examples of how the relationship, based on the principles of engagement with good faith, cooperation, and partnership, can truly be realized. We believe we can begin a new balanced relationship focusing on common concerns.

We appreciated the commitment made by Vietnam to have accepted 80% of the recommendations received at the last UPR report consideration, and we are pleased Vietnam has become a leader in the climate change and human rights issue at the UN Human Rights Council, championing the annual resolution in partnership with Bangladesh and the Philippines.

The UN DRIP talks about direct participation and without us as true partner it is not possible. Hence, we ask the government to partner with us to focus on climate change in our homeland and on the imminent issues from our people to the protection of a clean and healthy environment, which is not being realized yet.

We are indigenous peoples, and our knowledge, combined with the EMRIP technical advisory, can be helpful to reach United Nations objectives, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It says to leave no one behind and if we don't have enhanced participation, that is what will happen.

We would also formally invite EMRIP to our homeland, Kampuchea Krom, to examine the situation and to explore future actions to protect fundamental freedoms enshrined in the UN DRIP.

We hope the technical advisory note could contribute, but also be a catalyst for a new relationship rooted in mutual respect and human rights for all.

Thank you for your attention.