

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 11th Session

Item 7: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: good practices and lessons learned. Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Chair of the UNPFII, the Board of Trustees of the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples, and members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Human Rights Committee

Khmers-Kampuchea Krom Federation

Speaker: Licia Tran

Dear Madame Chairperson and Distinguished Colleagues,

We are pleased to hear from the UN Special Rapporteur. We also hope one day the SR on IPs can visit Mekong Delta. We have been able to assist several other UN Human Rights Council special procedures who were able to share the situation of discrimination we face daily. The SR on Cultural Rights did excellent work recognizing our Khmer Krom culture. The SR on Freedom of Religion was concerned when bearing witness to what our monks face for practicing our indigenous spiritual practices. Unfortunately, he cut his visit short due to the human rights abuses he witnessed and actions of the government.

Indigenous Khmer-Krom women continue to face severe discrimination for identifying as indigenous peoples and as women, which limits their capacity to address the issues and advocate for their fundamental human rights. Three years ago, On the 61st session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Kampuchea Khmers Krom Federation, on the behalf of many of these Khmer-Krom women, contributed to the shadow report on Viet Nam to provide recommendations that would mitigate the issues concerning public health, unemployment, and gender stratification. While the Khmer Krom has been made invisible by the actual practices of the Vietnam government. Women are now facing similar discrimination. It was concerning to see that at this session that the delegation of Viet Nam were all men. We envision a future partnership between our indigenous Khmer-Krom women and women in the roles of the Viet Nam government. Khmer Krom women have the right to and deserve to participate in every role in society.

We strongly recommend that Viet nam takes into consideration the recommendations submitted in the shadow report. To highlight, we asked for "National campaigns to provide informational sessions and positive public campaign respecting cultural integrity of the indigenous cultures and not force assimilation." There is no definitive or operational understanding of the term indigenous peoples, as language is unique in this respect. In the Vietnamese language, indigenous is synonymous as second-class; whereas, in the Khmer language, it is a word we indigenous peoples are proud of being. With this being said, it is important to distribute across the country copies of treaties and conventions such as CEDAW in the Khmer language for Khmer-Krom women to be able to read and identify their rights. It is important to note that there is a false conception of indigenous peoples in Viet Nam. Through understanding, there is good faith in the partnership between member state and indigenous peoples - not as ethnic minorities.

We will continue to engage at the three sessions of the UN Human Rights Council annually. We also will participate with the core UN HR treaty bodies when Vietnam is reviewed. We hope Vietnam will implement the recommendations