

Seventh Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Item 8(a) Indigenous Children and Youth

Collective Statements of Indigenous Peoples from the Khmer Kampuchea-Krom Federation and the Montagnard.

Speaker: Somalin Meng Thach

Madam Chair and Council members, on behalf of the Khmer Kampuchea-Krom Federation and the Montagnard Foundation, we would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak about the situation of our indigenous children and youth. It has been 7 years now since the U.N adopted the MDG, however there is no difference in our homeland. The Khmer's conditions of societal ills remain due to structural inequalities. We look forward first and foremost to the production of the MDGs in our indigenous Khmer language.

Our people still have no access to affordable basic health care. Furthermore, our youth still face discrimination and education in school lacks culturally appropriate courses. For example, some minority boarding schools discourage youth to speak their own native tongue when at school. This assimilation policy imposed on our youth erases our identity while we are speaking here today. International NGO study have shown that children with bilingual education have a higher success rate in education and own career. However Vietnam claims that it will impede the children from catching up with the technological changes that are taught in Vietnamese. We must educate Vietnam what UNESCO and indigenous peoples have discovered and reverse the trend to avoid the loss of our languages.

Generally madam chair, our indigenous children and youth are not the target of international aid distributed by international donors. While the U.N bodies agree that most vulnerable people are indigenous and minorities why then is the financial aid distributions and projects not yet made specifically targeted to these most vulnerable groups especially the Khmer Krom and the Montagnard? We feel that our children and youth are being discriminated against being intentionally left out of development project and other opportunities by Vietnam. Thus as the end of the MDG deadlines come closer, Vietnam will not have reached the MDGs.

With the assistance of the UN organizations, we ask that Vietnam to commit to following programs:

1. Guarantee equal education opportunity to our Khmer Krom and Montagnard youth and provide scholarships for higher education that encourages our youth participation in exchange programs.
2. For the country to study and implement the mother-tongue language program to reinstate Khmer and Dagar languages. On this regard we urge the Vietnam government to consult with international NGOs such as INFD.
3. We ask the government to look into educational and vocational trainings to reduce indigenous youth unemployment and create local opportunities at home to reduce the dangers of urban migrations and exploitations.
4. We ask Vietnam to allow local Indigenous youth to learn how to read and write in their indigenous languages through the promotion of schools opening in areas where the Indigenous reside.

5. With the help of WHO Vietnam to facilitate local health care clinics where Indigenous Peoples reside in Kampuchea Krom
6. Allow the monks who are the main holders of our cultures to have their traditional roles by giving them positions to teach our languages that is cultural appropriate for our children
7. Lastly, ask UNDP and UNESCO to help form a group to monitor the progress of these recommendations.

We believe the following recommendations will help Vietnam to achieve the MDGs and help alleviate the suffering continue cycle of suffering by our youth.

We ask that NGOs and U.N bodies such as UNDP, UNICEF and IFAD that have offices in Vietnam help to make these visions possible for the realizations for our youth and children by working and consulting together with the government and local indigenous populations and youth. Please consider our request.

Thank You.