

**Intervention to the Fourth Session of the
Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Global Indigenous Youth Caucus Statement - July 14, 2011
Agenda Item 5: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

The Global Indigenous Youth Caucus stands to address agenda item 5, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the **Declaration**). We will address three inter-related issues in light of the implementation of the Declaration: identity and recognition as Indigenous Peoples, education and participation in decision-making.

The Declaration makes specific mention in Article 22, paragraph 1 as to attention that must be paid to Indigenous youth in its implementation. As stated, it must be ensured that Indigenous youth enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination, in exercising their human rights. This is pertinent to us, as we have the responsibility of protecting and passing on traditional knowledge and cultural heritage to future generations.

As to identity and recognition as Indigenous Peoples, Article 33 states clearly on our right to determine our own identity. This should be applied to all Indigenous Peoples and the protection to their rights as Indigenous Peoples should be ensured. No Indigenous persons shall be excluded from international human rights protection, even if they are not recognized as Indigenous Peoples either domestically or internationally. The need to include such populations under international and domestic indigenous rights protection, in accordance with Article 33 is an urgent issue.

A profound education system reflecting indigenous peoples' heritage and specific needs is an essential part in cultivating youth's capacity of independent thinking and of generating own opinions. Youth needs to be given the chance to learn about their culture and heritage. But bound to a mainstream educational system, The knowledge Indigenous youth can study related to indigenous issues is limited and often misleading. This kind of education often leads to assimilation and loss of direct sense of autonomous roots.

As the Experts stated in the report on education in 2009, access to equal and quality education is a fundamental gateway to development and poverty eradication for Indigenous peoples. Access to such education and resources for youth is a major concern for the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus. Young Indigenous people often have poor access to educational facilities, experience institutional racism in schools and are recorded as having low attendance rates across all levels of education. There are also low expectancy standards that are posed among Indigenous youth in terms of their academic capability and succession.

Furthermore, Indigenous youth should be able to learn what their rights are and what instruments recognize and ensure those rights. This is the very basic step to enhance Indigenous youth's participation in decision-making. Unfortunately, some indigenous youth are deprived to learn about their rights. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is not allowed to distribute freely in Kampuchea-Krom, despite Vietnam has adopted UNDRIP. Most of the Khmer-Krom do not even know the existence of UNDRIP and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Any human rights workshop in order to educate

Khmer-Krom about their basic rights is not permitted or interfered by the authority. This was also the case in North India and Bangladesh.

The Global Indigenous Youth Caucus observed some good practices of provide courses on Indigenous language learning and Indigenous culture and history in some countries, like New Zealand and Taiwan. However, it is not enough to have those courses as optional courses parallel to the mainstream curricula. Implementing indigenous language and culture into mainstream schooling curricula will affirm articles 14, 15, 17, 21 and the preamble of the Declaration.

Recommendations

- 1) To implement Article 15 and 34, Indigenous language and culture must be included universally in all levels of mainstream education curricula and supported by appropriate funding. All indigenous youth and children shall have equal access to education designed for our need, in our language, and reflects our world views. This will enhance our chance to participate in decision-making process and provide valuable advices from our fresh perspective.
- 2) There is a need to develop a model for Indigenous youth to participate in decision making roles as a peak representative/consultative body that has federal, state and local recognition
- 3) Encourage States to ensure representation of Indigenous peoples in decisions about our issues, including through supporting nationally elected representative bodies.
- 4) Encourage States to assist and implement Indigenous youth parliaments within their countries. The parliament formation should be elected by the Indigenous peoples of the nation.
- 5) The Expert Mechanism and the Special Rapporteur continue to encourage the endorsement and incorporation of the Declaration as mandated by article 42 of the Declaration, with participation of the youth from the relevant region.
- 6) The Global Indigenous Youth Caucus observed that many countries have adopted the Declaration without actual and practical actions of implementation, like Nepal and India. Given that the Declaration is and will continue to be a key document in the protection of our Indigenous rights, on behalf of the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, I hereby again call for your attention that adoption does not equal to implementation. The provisions of the Declaration shall be incorporate in ~~the~~ every country's constitutional scheme.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.