

Statement of Hmong People
Speech by Dr. Vang Pobzeb
at the 15th Session of the U.N. Working Group
on Indigenous Populations
Geneva, Switzerland

Item 4, July 29, 1997.

Chairperson and Members of the U.N. Working Group:

I am the representative of the Hmong people in the global system. I am speaking on behalf of the Hmong people.

I agree with many other representatives of indigenous peoples and populations on the definition and concept that "indigenous peoples" are indigenous people, tribal people, minority people, and people who are least developed, poor and disadvantaged. They have maintained their culture, traditions and tribal governments, society and systems of life for many thousands of years. They are people who want self-determination. They want to be allowed to freely determine their political principles and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. Indigenous people have different cultural principles, societies, systems, ways of life and languages.

About 12 million Hmong people in the global system and 300 million people at the global level are indigenous people. They are the least educated and developed people.

Hmong people and 300 million indigenous people in the global system need true self-determination; the right to development; human rights; political, social, cultural and economic rights, and the right to peace.

I strongly encourage the United Nations to adopt the Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Dr. Vang Pobzeb
Representative of the Hmong people