

Ninth Session of the Expert Mechanisms on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

1115 July 2016

Item 8: The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

**Speaker: Son Chum Chuon**

Mr Chair,

On behalf of millions of KhmerKrom people living in our beloved KampucheaKrom, we would like to say thank you for giving us a voice here at EMRIP. While we are encouraged that countries such as Vietnam has supported the adoption of UNDRIP in 2007 however, very little has changed for our indigenous KhmerKrom people.

Today, Khmer Krom people are denied the right to freely practice their religion and pass on their culture, and are treated as second-class citizens. They continue to suffer oppression and harassment when trying to exercise their rights to religious beliefs and practices, and the rights to freedom of expression and access to information are muffled. Their freedom of movement is closely controlled and restricted. All of these rights are the responsibility of the Vietnamese governments to respect and uphold.

It is more important than ever that indigenous peoples like the KhmerKrom people are not left behind and are protected by the rights enshrined in UNDRIP. However, such protections are only accessible if States recognize the indigenous peoples within their borders. Without this crucial first step of recognition of who we are and our existence on our motherland, attainment of the end goals UNDRIP will be difficult and long time coming for the indigenous peoples living in Vietnam.

We would like to recommend the following recommendations:

1. Urge Member States, that have not already recognized their indigenous people, work with the UN Mechanism such EMRIP and Permanent Forum by having a round table session to begin recognize the distinctive legal, political status and the rights of all unrecognized IPs. Prioritizing this would ensure that all indigenous peoples have a voice and be successful in accessing their rights under UNDRIP.
2. Seek the help of UNESCO in collaboration with indigenous peoples to translate UNDRIP into the native languages of the indigenous people and help create capacity building projects on the ground. The implementation of UNDRIP is only successful if the indigenous peoples themselves are aware of it.
3. Ask that Vietnam establishes a national human rights institution in Kampuchea-Krom in partnership and cooperation with KKF, a peaceful organization that has been actively promoting the human rights of its indigenous peoples for over a decade so that they could fully participate in all decision making processes affecting their culture, social and economic status without fear or discrimination.

Thank you