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STATEMENT BY MEGHALAYA PEOPLES HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL, INDIA

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Human Rights Council
Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
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ITEM NO – 6

Mr. Chair,

Khublei shibun ba phi la shah ia nga ban kren ha kane ka por.

Peace is the primary goal of the United Nations, and the major reason for its existence. In the preamble of the United Nations Charter, the peoples of the world proclaimed their determination to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” and to live together in peace with one another as good neighbors. The Preamble to the UDHR also recognizes the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom of justice and peace in the world. The right to peace for indigenous peoples is not just a moral right or a human desire but it is also birth right because we also want to live in peace.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a profound and conceptually dauntless open testimonial with an aim to empower and help indigenous peoples recognize that they have the same rights as anyone else such as the rights to land territories and resources and many other rights. Though the implementation is still a tougher task, and this is the biggest challenges faced by the indigenous peoples of the remote corner of North East India, the ancestral homeland of more than 250 indigenous communities because the term “**indigenous peoples**” is still being rejected by India, which is actually not the case.

The Indigenous peoples of the region who stand up in defending for their collective fundamental rights and freedom to their own land, territories and resources continued to suffer from many arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and other pattern of human rights abuses. With the increasing militarization in the region and the enforcement of many security legislation such as the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA), National Security Act, 1980, Unlawful Activities and Prevention Act, 1967, there have been very less priority given to many economic, educational, social and other cultural rights. As a result,

the indigenous peoples continued to suffer from many discriminatory and adverse treatment be in their customs, traditions, history, languages and their way of life. There are also indigenous peoples of the region who are now living in the other Indian metropolitan cities, in quest of job and for education, continue to suffer from many 'unabated institutionalized discrimination' and 'racial profiling' and they have been selectively targeted, and denied of justice in many several cases. Many of such attacks and assaults, rape, especially on indigenous women have been unrecorded due to fear of social stigma and boycott in the Indian cities and from their own communities at home. Recently, at the BRICS Summit, a very large number of indigenous peoples were allegedly being racially profiled and put under preventive detention for no fault of theirs by the Police in New Delhi just because their physical features is very similar to those of the Tibetans or the Mongoloids.

On 24th April 2012 Ms. Dana Silva M. Sangma an MBA Student from Meghalaya, committed suicide inside the hostel of Amity University Campus due to the the alleged reported of humiliation by the exam invigilators. On 28 June 2012 the MLA of Punjab Assembly, Ajit Singh Mofar, while moving a resolution in the Assembly seeking to tackle stray dogs menace in his state said that, **{I quote}“for whatever they do to them be sent to China and North East India as a way to tackle the growing menace of these canines”¹ {un quote}**. This act of immature and harsh remark by a responsible legislator in the main land of India is not only an insult to the indigenous peoples of the region, but it has exposed the ill mentality, lack of knowledge on indigenous culture and a clear 'discriminatory attitude' towards the indigenous peoples of North East India. Mr. Chair, these are few examples that I would like to highlight to all of you here in this august meeting.

We therefore request the Members of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples and the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and other UN Bodies and Mechanism, to urge the Member States, in particular India who have yet do so, to implement the UN Historic Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples which was endorsed 5 years ago in recognizing the existence of the Indigenous Peoples who have been living peacefully for centuries in the region, keeping the strength of mind and the commitment made in both letter and spirit.

KHUBLEI & THANK YOU.

¹ Press Trust of India / New Delhi July 02, 2012, 15:05: <http://www.business-standard.com/generalnews/news/cong-mlas-stray-dogs-remark-derogatory-animal-rights-body/27285/>