

It is an honor to speak today in this interactive dialogue. I am Hayleigh Ksor, an indigenous Degar from the Central Highlands, and a fellow at the Hawaii Institute for Human Rights. It is the first time I am speaking here at the United Nations permanent forum on indigenous issues. It is an important date for my indigenous people as it is the first time youth speak here at the UNPFII. It is an honor to participate with such an esteemed panel of dedicated women pursuing peace as I desire to pursue a career in international human rights and it is inspiring to see strong female mentors defending indigenous rights. I want to become an attorney not pursuing profits but protecting rights of the Degar people for a better life.

I agree that the intersectionality of the issues raised is an important component to be able to realize peace and human security for all in our indigenous homelands and nations. It is especially important for us indigenous peoples that have survived wars that utilized our ancestral lands as a war zone. The central highlands is our sacred space where we originate. The states involved in the war only see it as a strategic lens. However, it is our lives. Women understand life and must be included in the peacemaking process rooted in our cultural practices of conflict resolution. We propose a panel on Peace, Cultural Rights & Women's Empowerment in Southeast Asia next year.

As a young woman, I am pleased that the panel understands how women must be involved. More important it is powerful that women must be central to conflict resolution. In my homeland, Indigenous women experience broad multifaceted human rights abuses influenced by multiple forms of vulnerability of marginalization due to state practices and policies. Unfortunately, the government is perpetuating a problem not protecting the people in the Central Highlands.

Our forest in the Central Highlands is central to our culture and well-being of our people. We are eager to participate in providing information but also enacting the recommendations to improve our indigenous participation and protection of our ancestral homelands.

Our people lived in traditional long houses. We are now banned from constructing our ancestral houses since the government has depleted our natural forests that provided spiritual and natural resources for the perpetuation of our culture. Our trees, bamboos and other materials we required to build our homes have been destroyed by current practices by government and corporations in the Central Highlands. We agree with earlier presentation by the special rapporteur on Cultural Rights putting the C in ESC rights is essential. Many of our ESC rights are denied including the fundamental right to food. Our traditional methods of farming are currently banned and land confiscated. Many of our people are starving and forced to pick up items from the place where trash is dumped.

In conclusion, we agree with the comments by PFII Member from Arctic Dalee

Sambo. There is an increased trend of violence and threats against indigenous peoples in the defense of their rights. But our people in Central Highlands have constantly experienced it for decades. We echo the call to consider a United Nations Declaration on indigenous human right Defenders.

When rights are denied, peace is impossible. Let's work together to realize peace through realization of rights. We will ensure the government will be held accountable in the 2030 Development Agenda. We are eager to ensure UN Sustainable Development Goal #16 for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

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