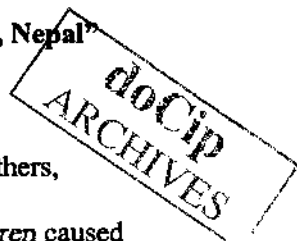


"Worsening situation of Indigenous women and children in ongoing arm conflict, Nepal"
Prepared by Ms. Ang Dawa Sherpa 11 May.2004, NY



Honorable Chair Person,
Distinguished Members of the PF, Respected Panelists and indigenous sisters and brothers,

I would like to share with you the worsening situation of indigenous women and children caused by the ongoing armed conflict in my country. My name is Ang Dawa Sherpa. I come here from Nepal on behalf of the Sherpa Association and the National Indigenous Women's Federation of Nepal.

Sherpa is one of the indigenous peoples of Nepal. We are known as honest, hardworking and peace-loving followers of Buddhism. Like other indigenous peoples of my country, we are being deeply affected by violence. Since the Sherpas live in the Himalayan region, they are marginalized and isolated from basic necessities.

Nepal is known as one of the most violent countries in the world today. The constitution is centered on Hinduisation, culture and language colonization, corruption, discrimination against indigenous people and women, etc. It is responsible for bringing blood and tears to the Buddha's peaceful land. The indigenous people, and in particular women and children, are affected triply and suffer more severely than others.

Children are being used to carry and play with guns and bombs instead of books and pens. Schools are closed and used to shelter armed forces, they have been a "war zone" for some time. Innocent children are being kidnapped, wounded and killed as innocent casualties. Hundreds of women are being widowed, children orphaned, and elders are helpless. The numbers of victims must be increasing in my country even as I am presenting this intervention to you today. There is no guarantee of people returning live even from the hospitals, Temples, and the holy places, which are also insecure and affected by the entire situation.

Women are the mothers, who give birth to maintain the human society and the natural life in this world. They symbolize beauty, peace and love. Unfortunately, the women in my country are being forced to be involved in the war, taking arms to kill and kidnap their own brothers, sisters and children in the so-called movement for liberation led by nonindigenous people. Indigenous women and young are being targeted for misuse by the Maoists that they could have taken advantage of their situation of poverty, discriminated lives, deprived and marginalized from the mainstream and no opportunity in the indigenous area. So they are held in suspicion by the government force, which also often leads to arrest, disappearance and death. Because of the surrounding armed forces, the rates of violence against women, including torture, rape, suicide and death in childbirth have been increasing in this ongoing arm conflict.

Lastly, I'd like to urge all the concerned and respected delegates to take the initiative to restore peace to my country, my Nepal, and to encourage the creation of an environment for redrafting the constitution to make it more balanced, and based on the essence of equality, in order to maintain peace and prosperity in our society, our country and our entire world.

Thank you chair person.