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UNPFII: Future Works

Sixth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Item 9: Future Work

Joint Statement of the Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation and the Montagnard Foundation

Speaker: Sira KIM

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Thank you

Madame Chair,

We are particularly encouraged by your response comment on Tuesday towards the statement made by Vietnam representative that, "the purpose of the permanent forum is to have indigenous people to be able to voice their concerns on any issues relating to people in their homeland."

In Vietnam there is growing evidence that the indigenous khmer krom and other indigenous peoples often bear the greatest burden of poverty. There are also factors that limit indigenous Khmer Krom and the Montagnard peoples the capacity to take an active role in decision-making through the local community. These include limited access to services, programs and lack of recognition and representation. For example, in Vietnam it is dangerous for people to stand up for their rights and organize a movement. The KKF accumulates information from our homeland to present to the global community to protect our fellow Khmer.

Vietnam attends the UNPFII every year and also supported the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, yet Vietnam continue to deny our existence as the indigenous peoples. Vietnam needs to commit more than just rhetoric and repeated statements, we need the dialogue you Madam chair suggested. We are extended a hand of human rights, reconciliation and peace in our region of Asia to the Vietnam government. Will they accept a historic meeting this week or will we repeat this scenario again next year while more Khmer Krom's lives worsen?

In light of the forum's future work, we would like to propose the following recommendations:

- We requests that Vietnam to have an open dialoge with our Khmer kampuchea-Krom Federation as a first step
- Request the help of the Permanent Forum members and Madame Chair to help set up a series of meeting with KKF, Montagnard Foundation and the Vietnam government so that we may begin the process of identifying our indigenous peoples in their respective areas. Only through such dialogue can the needs of our indigenous peoples become visible and the achievement of the MDGs become a collaborative aspiration by all.