

FIRST SESSION OF THE PERMANENT FORUM
ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

Statement by:

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Check against delivery

“Choho rimborche, donbo dugu, nana - aagna, jojo - aale then rho dugu mokkon da Asia la then Nepal la Aadibasi - Janajati then Tamang hyulba then ngala gyamse phyafulla and Jyaba danba!”

Mr. Chair; excellencies; distinguished guests; indigenous brothers and sisters; representatives of governments, UN Agencies, non-government organisations; and fellow Forum members !

I have the honour to bring warm greetings to you all from indigenous peoples of Nepal and Asia including my own Tamang people.

Mr, Chair, first of all I would like to congratulate you for being elected as Chair. I extend my fullest co-operation and support. I also like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague Permanent Forum members for electing me as one of the Vice Presidents of the Forum. I would also like to thank the Asian Indigenous peoples for their confidence upon me and electing me for the Permanent Forum.

It is indeed a moment of joy and pride for all the indigenous peoples of the world. We the indigenous peoples have been struggling for a long time to be heard and to be visible. Our struggle has been for the recognition of our existence, our problems, our perspective for our self development and most importantly for our right to self-determination including our individual and collective human rights. It has been a long journey to be here and it is still a long journey to go.

We are entering into UN family as the representatives of our indigenous peoples. At this moment, I would like to remember all those who are no more with us but had the dream for today and had struggled for this event. I would like to pay tributes to them for their contributions. I would like to thank all our indigenous elders, our brothers and sisters who are present here today in this historic first session of the Permanent Forum. What we have achieved is the result of our constant and collective struggles. I would like to congratulate you all for this collective shared achievement. I would also like to acknowledge Governments and international Non-Government Organizations for their constant supports in this journey.

The establishment of the Permanent Forum is a significant milestone in the long struggle of indigenous peoples and is a historic step forward to regain standing within the global community. The Permanent Forum formally integrates indigenous peoples and their representatives into the structure of the United

Nations. It marks the first time that representatives of states and non-state actors have been accorded parity in a permanent representative body within the United Nations Organization. The international Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples had proclaimed that the goal of the decade is to develop cooperation between international community and indigenous peoples and the governments and the indigenous peoples partnership in action to solve the problems face by the world's indigenous peoples. The forum's structure reflects this aspiration and expects the real partnership.

We are all aware that the Permanent Forum cannot meet the entire aspirations of indigenous peoples but it is the only first body within UN system where indigenous peoples are being represented. The Permanent Forum has the mandates for providing expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to ECOSOC, as well as to programmes, funds and agencies of the United Nations and promoting co-ordination of activities and dissemination of information on indigenous issues but the proper role of Forum could be broader than the literal wording of its mandate. It is our duty to engage constructively to create space and make it workable for the rights and welfare of indigenous peoples of the world. How much benefit we can maximise from the Permanent Forum depends on our collective wisdom and creativity.

I am honoured to get this opportunity to be with the indigenous brothers and sisters from all over the world and with the government representatives in the Permanent Forum. I am very much aware of the challenges, the great responsibilities and the obligations. We must be conscious that while we are meeting here within UN family, so many of our indigenous brothers and sisters and children are facing adverse impacts of racial discrimination, religious persecution, economic marginalization, globalization, logging, mining, displacements, human rights abuses, militarization, political oppressions and all forms of ethnocidal attacks. Our cultures, our languages, our customs and our cosmovision are under threat. 50 % percent of the world's languages, mostly indigenous languages are dying within 20- 30 years. The accelerating speed of poverty is causing displacement from our land. The present environmental degradation has direct and adverse impact on indigenous peoples, specially the indigenous women and the children. The loss of forest, biodiversity and climate change through human caused GHG have threatened our peoples' survival, food security, medicinal plants and life of the mother earth. The wars and the armed conflicts in the indigenous territories are costing the life of our many indigenous people.

Indigenous peoples and nations therefore want to see Permanent Forum as safeguard shield against the violations, abuses and injustice to indigenous peoples'

human rights. Indigenous peoples want to see Permanent Forum as a focal point in the United Nations for safeguarding the political, cultural, social, environmental, economic and developments rights of indigenous peoples. There are enormous challenges before the Permanent Forum, but there are great opportunities and potentialities too.

The immediate challenges are:

1. The institutionalisation of the permanent forum, like establishment of separate secretariat, securing of adequate fund and developing strategies.
2. Mainstreaming of indigenous peoples in UN system and in regional, national and local government by formulating policies and programmes, and
3. Developing mechanism to address economic, social and cultural development of indigenous peoples all over the world.
4. Database on the situation of indigenous peoples

At the end I would like to urge the national governments, international communities, foundations and indigenous peoples for your support and contributions. The success of the Permanent depends on the competence, credibility and legitimacy of those who want to make an impact on its work. Permanent Forum has been our shared vision and the effectiveness and success of the Permanent Forum depends on the shared responsibilities of us all.

In closing, I would like to thank indigenous peoples and nations of this land for their hospitality extended to us.

Thank you!