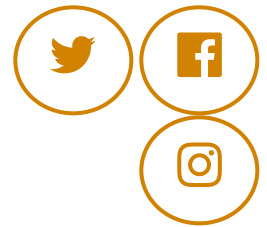


Apr 28, 2010

## UNPO at 9th Session UNPFII



*UNPO and Members take*

*active role at 9th Session UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York amidst shocking news that ethnic Mongolian representative invited by UN is detained by China on way to attend.*

*UNPO and Member representatives from all continents have been raising key concerns and playing a key role at the 9th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, taking place in New York until May 1 2010.*

The Forum has taken Articles 3 and 32 of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as its specific focus during the 9th Session. These articles promote full and effective participation and consultation in development

policies and processes and around 2000 indigenous representatives from across the world are taking part at this year's Session as testament to the importance placed on genuine participation. UNPO Members present over the 2 week session have included the **Khmer Krom**, the **Degar-Montagnards**, the **Cordillera**, **Ogoni**, **Taiwan**, **Mapuche**, **Southern Mongolia**, the **Crimean Tatars**, and the **Maasai**.

The Session was however shocked and dismayed at the news that Mr. Sodmongol from **Southern Mongolia** (also known as Inner Mongolia) had been detained by Chinese authorities at Beijing Airport upon departure. Mr. Sodmongol had been granted full UN sponsorship to attend the event but in a clear display of contempt for the UN and its core values and principles, Chinese authorities stopped him from boarding the plane. His current whereabouts and wellbeing remain unknown. UNPO deplores and condemns such heavy handed tactics by Chinese authorities but are regretfully unsurprised. China has consistently and persistently targeted indigenous and ethnic minority members within its borders who have the opportunity to articulate on international platforms the severe oppression and discrimination they face on a daily basis. Mr Enhebatu Togocho, President of the Southern Mongolia Human Rights Information Centre voiced his dismay and concern at the unfolding situation, requesting that the UN intervene to guarantee his safety, especially since Mr. Sodmongol had been the special guest of the UNPFII.

The **Khmer Krom Federation** brought a delegation of around 20 participants to the 9th Session of the UNPFII, a large component of whom were active youth representatives. Over the course of two weeks, the team monitored and reacted to statements, participated and contributed to the daily Youth Caucus and the Asian Caucus sessions, participated at side events and lobbied other indigenous representatives and civil society organisations and wrote and delivered statements outlining the violations of human and indigenous rights that the **Khmer Krom** undergo each and every day in Vietnam.

Under agenda item 7, [Ms Chantria Tram, speaking on behalf of the Khmer Krom Federation and the Montagnards Foundation](#) criticised the resistance of the Vietnamese government towards conferring indigenous status to the **Degars** (Montagnards) or the **Khmer Krom**. In a strong and passionate intervention, Ms. Tram asked whether Khmer temples dating more than 2000 years were not proof enough of their longstanding connection to the land of Kampuchea-Krom, and wondered whether there was a separate rule for Vietnam in considering criteria for indigenous status. Stating that "we cannot change the past but we can and most definitely should collaborate to work for a better future". She reminded the Forum that this was the 6th consecutive year that they made the same request that designation of indigenous status should be clarified.

The joint statement also contributed to a discussion on boardin school provsion and quality for indigenous people, with a request that quality,

quantity and geographical dispersion of schools be unbiased “to ensure education for all is not a dream dependent on ethnic background”.

The response from the Vietnamese representative included allegations that the statement was formed of totally fabricated information, and that the group, since based in the diaspora were unrepresentative of the people within its borders. However, the chair of the UNPFII then interjected to remind Vietnam that the Forum provided the space for dialogue between NGOs and their governments and that they had full right to express their views.

Violations of freedom of religion were highlighted by the UNPFII Youth Caucus, chaired by Ms. Pi-i Debby Lin of **Taiwan**, with particular focus on the plight of three **Khmer Krom** monks who were detained and defrocked by Vietnamese authorities over the preceding few years.

In other statements, the dumping of household waste in ancient ancestral land was condemned by a **Mapuche** representative, not only for the insult to the indigenous people's lands but also as a threat to livelihoods as Mapuche were forced to migrate away from the region as land became unusable.

Elsewhere, Mr. Ivan F. Torafing of the **Cordillera** people in the Philippines drew attention to the illegality of some police detentions of young **Cordillera** people, often under the guise of protecting against violent uprisings despite the nonviolent nature of **Cordillera** movements.

Ms. Ayla Bakkali representing the **Crimean Tatar** Mejlis, spoke out on issues regarding preservation and protection of indigenous language. She said that “in order to preserve one's cultural heritage the importance of language becomes the seedbed and instrument of empowerment for and in our self-determination”. She also called for assistance in the repatriation of more than 100,000 remaining **Crimean Tatars** who remain exiled outside of the Crimean peninsula, as a result of the forced deportation of the entire **Crimean Tatar** population under Stalin's command in 1944.

#### **Meetings with Mr. James Anaya, Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Issues**

Mr. Kok Ksor, President of the Montagnards Foundation, and **Degar-Montagnard** representative to UNPO secured a meeting with the Special Rapporteur for Indigenous Issues, Mr. James Anaya during the first week of the Forum. During their meeting, Mr. Ksor was able to present to him a detailed report of violations against the Degar people that have taken place in the Central Highlands at the hands of the Vietnamese government over many years, and which have yet to cease. Mr. Ksor requested that Mr. Anaya raise the issue with the US government as well as the Vietnamese government to ensure that they realise such actions do not escape the attention of the international community. He also requested that Mr. Anaya visit the Central Highlands himself in order to fully appreciate the violations taking place.

### UNPO Side Event

UNPO organised a Side Event entitled “Water Politics – Impacts on Disenfranchised Communities” which gave an overview of the exploitation of water resources at the hands of governments or large corporations. The event marked the publication of a special report that focused on the construction of dams along the River Indus that stretches from **Tibet**, through **Gilgit Baltistan** and into **Sindh** province, Pakistan, as well as river diversions in **Al-Ahwaz** in Iran, fishing rights of the **Tsimshian** people in Canada, and access to water for the **Maasai** in Kenya. Mr Kok Ksor, president of the **Montagnards** Foundations and UNPO **Degar** representative spoke about exploitation in the Central Highlands in Vietnam, whilst Mr. Thach Thach, President of the Khmer Kampuchea-Krom Federation also spoke about the situation in **Khmer-Kampuchea Krom**.

A demonstration to raise awareness about the ongoing discrimination faced by the **Uyghur** people in East Turkestan at the hands of Chinese authorities also optimised the UNPFII with demonstrators and supporters representing **Southern Mongolians, Tibetans, Crimean Tatars** and Turks taking part, alongside Americans and Europeans. The demonstration organised by the Uyghur American Association, provided a platform for international perspectives on the situation to be aired, as well as personal testimonies from **Uyghur** and non-Uyghur individuals who had resided in the region. **Ms. Murphy of UNPO** called for the international community to ensure that China abide by its own Constitution, drawing attention to Article 35 that bestows freedom of association, speech, press and demonstration. It is dishonorable and regretful, she said, that these provisions in the Constitution remain unfulfilled and tokenistic at most.

### Side Events

During the first week of the 9th Session, the Mejlis of the **Crimean Tatar** People held a one day side-event entitled “Crimean Tatar Movement towards self-Determination”. Whilst London based representative Mr. Fevzi Amzaiev was unable to cross the atlantic as a result of the volcanic ash incident that cloaked Europe during the Forum’s first week, Ms. Ayla Bakkali from the American Association of Crimean Turks chaired and coordinated the event.

In another Side-Event, held on Monday April 26 2010, this time hosted by the Permanent Mission of Norway, Mr Joseph Ole Simel, Executive Director of Mainyoito Pastoralist Integrated Development Organization and UNPO **Maasai** representative spoke about land evictions that have negatively impacted upon the traditional livelihoods of the **Maasai** people in Kenya. The Key Note speaker was the Norwegian Minister of the Environment and International Development and was well attended by UN representatives, international institutions, indigenous representatives from around the world and international NGOs. Mr. Simel also spoke during an event entitled “Climate Negotiations – Assessment, Strategies and Ways Forward for Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Women” on April 28 2010.



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The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) is an international, nonviolent and democratic membership organisation. Its Members are indigenous peoples, minorities, unrecognised States and occupied territories that have joined together to defend their political, social and cultural rights, to preserve their environments and to promote their right to self-determination.

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