Statement of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group on the Agenda Item 2b
Review of the Regional Progress of the SDGs

Thank you very much Dear Chair for this intervention opportunity

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am Prem Singh Tharu from Nepal speaking on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples constituency of the APRCEM and the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP).

The pandemic exposed the inequalities and discrimination faced by Indigenous Peoples in access to social protection and services, quality healthcare and education, and continued lack of respect for our indigenous identity, knowledge, and contributions to the national development. While some communities were able to contain the spread of the virus using traditional measures and sustaining with forest and local resources, unfortunately this was not the case for indigenous communities in palm oil plantation and mining areas and those whose lands were expropriated for development projects without their FPIC. Their traditional livelihoods have been severely impacted due to lack of market for their produce as they could not compete with increased import of agricultural products as in the case of the indigenous farmers. Indigenous peoples defending their territories are criminalized falsely and access to justice and fair hearing are routinely denied. The contributions of Indigenous Peoples including Indigenous Women in protection and promotion of nature, resources, biodiversity and the planet are not recognized, and traditional natural resource management are criminalized in some cases.

Our Indigenous land and territories, rich in biodiversity and home to the remaining flora and fauna, is under threat with the imposition of extractive projects, “nature-based solutions”, and the shift to renewable energy being implemented without our FPIC and the continuing denial of states in recognizing our collective land rights.

The need to care for the remaining forests and resources is needed but conservation measures need to ensure a rights-based peoples centered approach, legal recognition of the collective land rights and recognition of Indigenous Peoples rights as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The Indigenous Peoples including Indigenous women are critically important to address the historical injustice committed against and continuing marginalization of Indigenous Peoples. COVID19 recovery measures in the short and long term should ensure the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples.

Last but not least, We Indigenous Peoples demand to timely replicate the Indigenous expertise, knowledge and good practices in the policy and programmes of the states to achieve the SDGs. And we wish for successful accomplishment of the 9th
APFSD. Let’s learn from the soil and Indigenous Peoples and replicate in our daily life if we are really committed to make the sustainable change, and experience the real change by 2030.

Thank you very much for attention