

**Statement from Indigenous Peoples and Their Communities on agenda item 3
‘Protecting our planet through regional cooperation and solidarity in Asia and the Pacific’**

Thank you, Madam Chair, for giving the opportunity

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, and Ladies and Gentlemen

I am Prem Singh Tharu from Tharu Indigenous community of Nepal, representing Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) and Indigenous Peoples Major Group.

We, Indigenous Peoples (IPs), would like to thank to the UN ESCAP for organizing the Seventh Asia Pacific Ministerial Session on Environment and Development on the theme of “Protecting our Planet through Regional Cooperation and Solidarity in Asia and the Pacific”. Indigenous Peoples have been playing instrumental roles and significantly contributing to protect our planet and mother earth since time immemorial. As evidence, 80% of the biodiversity are conserved in the indigenous land and territories, hence, meaningful participation and representation of the Indigenous Peoples and their communities are vital in the regional cooperation and solidarity for achieving the ambitious goals relating to environment and development.

We also highly appreciate the progress made by the Committee on Environment and Development (CED). We found the document of the agenda item 3 is very comprehensive, however, it has excluded the Indigenous Peoples and their environment friendly knowledge and sustainable practices, including knowledge and practices of women, youths and their communities, which are crucial to be integrated in protection and conservation of the planet.

Based on our historical contributions, but often marginalization and exclusion, we put forward the following key messages and collective recommendations;

- We urge to adopt and apply free prior and informed consent (FPIC) as the core conditional value for protection of the natural resources, biodiversity, ecosystem, and overall planet in indigenous lands and territories because it is one of the fundamental human rights which promotes to nature-based solution and environment-based approach rooted in the rights, practices and concerns of the indigenous peoples.
- We demand to acknowledge, recognize and include unique Indigenous Knowledge and practices relating to the environmental protection and conservation in the regional cooperation and solidarity documents along with scientific knowledge and technologies.
- Asia Pacific is the home of the 70% world’s Indigenous population who are the real environmental defenders in the region. Hence, we must be the part of any regional cooperation and solidarity in all phases, processes, and mechanisms.
- Excessive extraction and exploitation of natural resources in the name of development must be stopped because it has been fueling to environmental crisis; loss of biodiversity, climate crisis, impacting to the ecosystem and violating environmental human rights of the Indigenous Peoples, women, youths and their communities and ultimately indigenous peoples’ lives and cultures.
- Many indigenous peoples and their communities are displaced and evicted from their ancestral lands and territories in the name of conservation and national parks. We strongly urge the governments and UN agencies to stop evictions of indigenous peoples and respect human rights-based conservation. Without proper FPIC, any development and conservation programs/projects in indigenous lands and territories are not accepted and allowed as per the international human rights instruments.
- The use of hazardous toxic chemicals and pesticides in the name of smart agriculture are contaminating the soil and polluting the water and air and also affecting to the birds and other

species including to the human health and well-being. We urge to promote the use of bio-fertilizers, indigenous seeds and indigenous way of agriculture for food security and protecting the human being, species, ecosystem and the planet.

Last but not the least, we look forward to a meaningful and genuine partnership with all.

“Our planet is our accountability and responsibility so let’s collectively act to respect and protect our planet together”

Thank you Chair!