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KHMERS KAMPUCHEA-KROM FEDERATION

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Embracing UNDRIP: A Message from KKF's Executive President

Dear KKF Members, Supporters, and Friends:

As an executive president of the Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation (KKF), I want to address a matter of great importance that resonates deeply with our shared mission and values as part of our organization.

Recently, our hearts have been concerned about the arrest and imprisonment of several courageous Khmer-Krom activists, namely Thach Cuong, To Hoang Chuong, Danh Minh Quang, and Dinh Thi Huynh. Their only 'crime' was their commitment to distributing essential UN documents such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and organizing events to champion human rights, including International Women's Day. Yet, they now face persecution from the Vietnamese authorities despite Vietnam being a member of the Human Rights Council.

As the world's indigenous peoples unite to celebrate the adoption of UNDRIP, it is an opportune moment to reflect on the profound significance of this declaration for our voiceless Khmer-Krom community in our homeland, Kampuchea-Krom. Furthermore, we must underscore why the Khmer-Krom must be officially recognized as indigenous peoples without facing punishment for advocating the indigenous rights of their community.

The adoption of UNDRIP is a pivotal milestone for the Khmer-Krom and indigenous communities worldwide. Below are some of the main reasons why the UNDRIP holds immense value:

- Establishes a universal framework of minimum standards safeguarding indigenous peoples' survival, dignity, and well-being. It builds upon existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms, reinforcing their applicability to indigenous communities.
- Goes beyond other human rights charters by protecting collective and individual rights, offering comprehensive safeguards.

- Unequivocally affirms the right to self-determination. This includes the pivotal right to provide or withhold consent on projects that may impact indigenous territories.
- By adopting UNDRIP, the world acknowledges and respects the rights of indigenous peoples, recognizing their equality while honoring the right of all peoples to be different and be respected as such.
- Pays homage to the contributions of all peoples to the diversity and cultures that celebrate this as the common heritage of humankind.

For our Khmer-Krom, celebrating UNDRIP is synonymous with celebrating our identity, rights, and global presence. It affirms our inherent rights and a stride towards ensuring our survival, dignity, and well-being.

Moreover, recognizing the Khmer-Krom as indigenous peoples in the Mekong Delta carries profound significance:

- The Khmer-Krom people possess a rich cultural heritage that stretches back through the annals of time. Our culture is deeply intertwined with the Mekong Delta, with over four hundred temples spread across our homeland. Acknowledging Khmer-Krom as indigenous peoples is instrumental in preserving these tangible cultural legacies for future generations.
- Recognition is pivotal in safeguarding the rights of the Khmer-Krom. The Khmer-Krom have encountered severe restrictions on various fronts, including freedom of expression, assembly, association, information, and movement. The Khmer-Krom would be entitled to special protections under international law as indigenous peoples.
- The Khmer-Krom people have been integral to the history of the Mekong Delta for centuries. Our historical relevance is undeniable, and recognizing Khmer-Krom as indigenous peoples is a gesture of respect for our historical connection to this land and our substantial contributions to its history.
- Acknowledging the Khmer-Krom as indigenous peoples fosters diversity. It validates our unique culture and traditions while promoting understanding and respect among diverse ethnic groups. This paves the way for a more inclusive society that cherishes and celebrates its rich tapestry of cultures.

Most importantly, recognizing the Khmer-Krom as the indigenous peoples of the Mekong Delta is not merely an acknowledgment of our historical ties to this land. It is about safeguarding our cultural heritage, protecting our rights, promoting diversity, and

securing our future. It is a tribute to our unique identity and enduring contributions to our shared history.

As a member state that has adopted UNDRIP, Vietnam must now take the necessary steps to recognize the indigenous status of the Khmer-Krom, especially in the Mekong Delta. Doing so aligns with the global endeavor to eradicate discrimination and oppression, ensuring a brighter and more equitable future for all. With unwavering determination and an unyielding commitment to justice, may justice prevail for the Khmer-Krom, the indigenous peoples of the Mekong Delta.

Sincerely yours,

Sereivuth Prak

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Executive President
Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation

