

women are often raped by loggers who invade our villages. While the companies get rich from our forests, we are condemned to live in poverty.

The IFHR is of the opinion that the situation of indigenous peoples in Sarawak and in so many places elsewhere is that of a child who has fallen into a fast flowing river and cannot swim. The child cries out, extending its arm for someone to help. If no one takes the hand, the child will surely drown.

It is for this reason that the International Federation of Human Rights calls upon the United Nations, the government of governments, to do its utmost to assist all indigenous peoples which are threatened by their own governments. You must urge Member States to restore immediately the human and economic rights of the weakest and most vulnerable of the world's peoples.

Mr Chairman,

Must people die before you respond ? Must there be war, and blood running in the streets, before the United Nations will come to a people's assistance ? Even though we are desperate, our people have avoided violence. We have used only peaceful methods of protest. Why does this organisation, which is dedicated to peace not take the necessary measures to help peaceful people ?

I say to my country, and to other developing countries, that in our race to modernize, we must respect the ancient cultures and traditions of our peoples. We must not blindly follow that model of progress invented by civilization. We may envy the industrialized world for its wealth ; but we must not forget that this wealth was brought at a very high price. The rich world suffers from so much stress, pollution, violence, poverty and spiritual emptiness.

The wealth of indigenous communities lies not in money or commodities, but in community, tradition, and a sense of belonging to a special place. The world is rushing toward a single culture. We should pause, and reflect on the beauty of diversity.

Let 1993, the year of Indigenous People, be a year of peace and hope, a year for the restoration of our bleeding forests and our threatened cultures. Let this year carry its message deep into the forest of Borneo, to a woman who weeps in the night, praying that the days of her children will not be like hers.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.