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Agenda Item 4 b)

JOINT STATEMENT:

Lao Human Rights Council, Hmong International Council, United Lao Council for Peace, Freedom and Reconstruction, Branch of Wisconsin, California, Minnesota. Hmong American Mutual Assistance, Lao Veterans of Wisconsin, Hmong 18 Council of Wisconsin, Fact Finding Commission.

I am Vaughn Vang, nominated by our Hmong Leaders and Hmong organizations in exile, to speak on behalf of our Hmong Lao relatives, who are forced to hide in the mountainous jungles of Laos, and for those who fled Laos - seeking refuge and safety in Thailand.

Our relatives inside Laos are at this very moment surrounded, chased, attacked and eliminated by Laotian and Vietnamese military.

Since the Vietnam War ended, thousands and thousands of Hmong Lao, who did not have a chance to escape Laos, have been subjected to genocide. I do know that this word should not be used lightheartedly, Mr. Chair, but the truth is, our people are being hunted and killed like animals.

Even though vehemently denied by Vietnam and Laos, our Hmong organizations provided since many years credible evidence that our people are indeed eliminated by military aggressions.

Some Hmong Lao in-hiding are first, second and third generation of parents, who may have been former CIA soldiers, recruited to support the US to prevent the spread of communism during the Vietnam conflict, but most of those in-hiding are villagers, who fled into the safety of remote jungles after experiencing unprovoked attacks by soldiers.

31 years after the Vietnam Conflict has ended, Hmong families are still hiding and running for their lives. Most of them are innocent women and children.

**It seems to us, that the current military aggressions are not simply a revenge for former involvement of the Hmong people in the Vietnam conflict – at present our people are being used for Vietnamese and Laotian military training purposes.**

The Special Zone, closed to foreigners - including the UN, is a military area, as large as 4 provinces, where most of our intimidated people in-hiding live.

"Even so there are Hmong organizations here today that characterize our people in-hiding as "freedom-fighters" or "rebels", we want to stress the point very strongly, Mr. Chair, that the Hmong-in-hiding are not an armed resistance movement. They do NOT want to create a separate Hmong country, their goal is NOT to overthrow the Laotian government.

**Our people are trapped and surrounded by military forces, and they are simply hiding out of fear!**

If they have weapons, they have no ammunition; if they have ammunition, they use them to defend their running women and children. Please refer to our report under chapter *defensive activities – active resistance*, and you will understand that our people purely act out of self-defense.

If caught by the soldiers, our people are tortured without pity; mutilated, chopped into pieces, girls and women get gang-raped, children's bellies are slit open with their intestines hanging out so they will suffer a slow death. No one survives who is found by the soldiers. Our people are eliminated after enduring terrible torture in the silent

Those who decide to come out of hiding meet an uncertain fate. Many get murdered, from others we never hear again, and we assume that they are dead. Just last month, 3 small groups of half-starved, sick and weak women and children came down from the highest mountain Phou Bia, to surrender. They were taken into the military camps. The grandmothers got killed, the women and girls were abused as sex slaves. Girls, as young as 9-10 years old, endured gang-rapes by the soldiers, until one by one they died. Only three mothers escaped and were able to directly report to us what had happened to them, which so far was only told by the villagers.

Mr. Chair, we submitted an independent and comprehensive Report written by Rebecca Sommer, based on claims made by Hmong Lao in-hiding from the armed conflict areas in Laos, and the refugees, who recently fled to Thailand.

That Report holds carefully selected and compiled evidence, testimonies, and summaries of eyewitnesses, from non-related sources. Our Hmong leaders and numerous Hmong organizations assisted in the compilation of information and the translations, and fully endorse the accuracy of the information provided in this independent Report, which at present is the most valuable document to clarify the complex situation of our people.

Mr. Chair, we are more than grateful and relieved to know, that the United Nations agencies and governments have started to put this issue on a high priority agenda. However, their approach is low-key diplomacy. Our people have no time for low-key diplomacy, we are losing lives!.

**We request, on behalf of the Hmong-in-hiding to the UN family, and governments:**

- To ensure that our message and the above-mentioned Report is used as a base of credible and useful information to effectively address the ongoing genocide our people have endured since generations.
- To see to it, that the Lao PDR and Vietnam immediately stop employing military forces against our people in-hiding and the villagers, and that the military units are removed from the land they live.
- To help create a safety zone in the traditionally populated areas for the Hmong Lao, who live currently in-hiding.
- To request full access to the Special Zone in order to monitor and ensure our peoples' safety.
- To assist Laos in finding a peaceful and permanent solution in partnership with the Hmong groups-in-hiding, to ensure their free, prior and informed consent.
- To allocate funds and programs to assist the Hmong to come out of the jungle in safety,
- To create programs and funds, to help those who come out of hiding to find their place within the Laotian society.
- To provide humanitarian aid, healthcare, bilingual education and sustainable development projects designed in accordance with the way of life and culture of our people.
- That the Human Rights Council create a Indigenous Peoples Task Force to address the urgent issue of genocide of the Hmong Lao-in-hiding.

Mr. Chair, in closing, we remind, that there is only one solution to stop the waves of Hmong Lao fleeing from Laos, and flooding into Thailand's refugee camps.

- Laos must stop the racial, religious and cultural oppression and discrimination, and the genocide against the Hmong-in-hiding.

If Hmong were allowed to life in peace, trust, and without racial and religious discrimination and oppression, there would be no need to flee the land Hmong was born, loves and left involuntarily.

Thank you for your attention.