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Fifth Session of the Forum on Minority Issues
Implementing the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic,
Religious and Linguistic Minorities: Identifying positive practices and opportunities

Dates: 27 and 28 November 2012

Venue: Room XX, Palais des Nations,
Geneva, Switzerland

*Mr. Chairman (or Madam Chair)
Ladies and gentlemen,*

The Cham are the descendants of the ancient kingdom of Champa which was once located in central Vietnam. Today, there remains about 100,000 people living in the province of Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan.

Since 1841, the Cham enjoyed a special status granted by the court of Huê designed to protect the territory for this ethnic group and promote its economic and cultural life.

After 1975, the Vietnamese government abrogated this legal status and imposed the policy of proletariats by confiscating lands belonging to the Cham without a fair and just compensation.

Living in a rural areas devoid of cultivable land and high un-employment, the Cham is descent into misery and poverty that affect their survival, dignity and well-being.

Recommendations

In the development of effective participation of the Cham people in the socio-economic life in Vietnam, the International Office of Champa re-iterates once again in Fifth Session of the Forum on Minority Issues, the following recommendations to the Vietnamese authority:

1. – Restore the status granted by the course of Hue in 1841 for the Cham minority. This will enable them to have the land ownership and to protect their social structure and livelihood.
2. – Compensate fairly and justly for the land of the Cham that were confiscated after 1975, the land they rightfully own, not by the expropriation of others.
3. – Re-instate the affirmative-action policy that grants young Cham in the rural areas special access to higher education, without going through the entrance examination imposed for all. At the very least, the students must be able to provide their graduation certificates from High

School and minor certificates in the Cham language.

4. – Grant special measures so that the Cham can attain positions in government agencies, from local to national level, without regard to their ethnic and family ties

5. – Consider a policy in which the Cham language is being taught where large population of this ethnic is resided. Uphold the traditional Cham script handed down since the 17th century, not the modern script recently modified by the Script Committee set up in 1978.

6. – Grant Cham people the right to create a council of notables and dignitaries who will bring the voice of Cham minority to participate in the local and national decisions concerning the social, cultural and religious life of this minority.

Thank you.