The Asian Indigenous Women’s Network (AIWN) strongly supports the program of the Second decade for the World’s Indigenous People. We note in particular items 40, 73, of the Program of Action for the decade, which highlights the full and effective participation of the women and youth in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives.

While we see the important initiatives of various UN agencies to include in their program of work, activities, programs and policies that improve the conditions or advance the rights of indigenous women and more recently the agencies report of their ongoing priorities in relation to indigenous peoples, we are concerned at the few programs and policies implemented especially in the Asian region and the measurable transformative impacts and outcomes they have on indigenous peoples communities. How initiatives and actions trickle down to the indigenous peoples is of great concern. We thus call on the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to adopt the following recommendations:

1) to urge the World Health Organization (WHO) to:
   a) ensure the full access and effective participation of women in its “Outline of a global strategy to improve the health of indigenous peoples”;
   b) build on existing indigenous health programs and practices found in Asian countries, and develop innovative programs that nurture and promote indigenous women’s health knowledge. We are concerned with the weak support mechanism for the transmission of women’s knowledge on indigenous health.

We note with appreciation the efforts and initiatives of the World Health Organization (WHO) to integrate indigenous health knowledge in its work on mainstream health care systems and in sensitizing health personnel concerning the protection of indigenous knowledge systems.

2) to urge the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to:
   a) extend its program of work to Asian indigenous women especially in areas with low indicators of women’s access and participation in the political and economic sphere and in cases where there is high incidence of violence against women;
b) facilitate or coordinate work or program that seeks women’s indigenous perspectives on grassroots development frameworks with a view to enhance efforts on redefining the MDG’s;

c) support the popularization and translations of important existing UN publications on various instruments and UN complaint mechanisms, treaty bodies, Special Rapporteurs, etc. into key indigenous languages to facilitate activities in raising women’s awareness and strengthen local mechanisms in addressing problems confronting them;

d) to support programs that train Asian indigenous leaders on how to use the various international instruments and UN complaint mechanisms especially in areas where national mechanism cannot address women’s issues and concerns;

3) to urge governments and UN agencies to take on the challenge and responsibility to address cultural revitalization and valuation to promote gender sensitive values and structures within indigenous communities. We note with great concern the disintegration of positive indigenous support mechanisms due to changes in traditional social, cultural and political institutions, coupled with emergence of new structures and roles that oppress indigenous women.

4) to urge governments particularly Asian Governments to take a more proactive role in the implementation of the program of activities of the Second decade for the World’s Indigenous People including generating funds for these activities and to adopt an inclusive approach to the development and implementation of specific programs for indigenous women in Asia.

We continue to raise problematic and abusive treatment of indigenous women in the name of custom and tradition and work proactively in removing prejudice and negative perceptions on indigenous women in particular, with a long term view of upholding indigenous women’s identity as a catalyst for change.