

TIME RECEIVED
February 18, 2015 6:59:26 PM GMT+01
18/02/2015 20:01

REMOTE CSID

DURATION
69

PAGES
2

STATUS
Received

NO.262 #001



PERMANENT MISSION OF THAILAND
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No. 52101/415

The Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and has the honour to refer to the Office's Note No. RRDD/ROLEND/DB/IPMS dated 5 December 2014 seeking information from States on the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural heritage, including through their participation in political and public life, for inclusion in a study by the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People, which will be presented to the Human Rights Council at its thirtieth session.

In this connection, the Permanent Mission has further the honour to forward herewith the requested information as prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. The same information in electronic format has also been sent to expertmechanism@ohchr.org.

The Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Permanent Mission of Thailand,
Geneva
18 February B.E. 2558 / 2015



Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
GENEVA.

**Rights of Indigenous Peoples with respect to their cultural heritage,
including through their participation in political and public life :**
The case of Thailand

- Thailand concurs with the spirit and intent of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which aims to protect the rights of indigenous peoples. However, Thailand does not have indigenous peoples according to the commonly used definition.
- Thailand is party to core United Nations human rights treaties including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). Both of the said treaties draw particular attention to rights of ethnic groups in the country. The latest country report under ICERD was an opportunity for the Government to conduct an updated survey on ethnic groups in all parts of the country and identify problems faced by them with regard to human rights.
- Discrimination based on race has always been prohibited by the constitution of Thailand. As a homogenous society, Thailand recognizes that diversities in culture and belief are valuable to the nation's cultural heritage. In each part of the country, there is a provincial office of Ministry of Culture assigned to protect and promote cultural heritage of each group located in the province. In provinces where there are various ethnic groups, the said office cooperates with the group representatives or villagers and frequently organizes activities according to their own tradition including establishment of museums.
- Ministry of Social Development and Human Security has set up a number of projects for ethnic groups to enhance their participation in public affairs and inclusive development. The Office of Ethnic Affairs under the Department of Social Development and Welfare is tasked with improving quality of life of persons belonging to ethnic groups in a manner compatible with their traditional belief.
- Additionally, under the Ministry of Culture, the Department of Culture Promotion is tasked with combating the risk of disappearance of ethnic languages. Measures which aim at preserving ethnic languages include creation of official data system of ethnic languages and traditions according to each ethnic group. Several programs are also in place to encourage participation of members of ethnic groups in the preservation of their cultural heritage by having ethnic group members collectively decide on the planning and management of their cultural heritage including ethnic languages. Since 2012, 25 ethnic languages have been declared as national cultural heritage of local wisdom in order to raise awareness among people in the country about the preservation of ethnic languages.
- Regarding participation in political affairs, persons belonging to ethnic groups in Thailand who have Thai nationality and have all other qualifications as specified by the law can exercise their right to vote in elections as Thai citizens. The government aims to reach 100% of people exercising their right to vote. However, in order to apply as a candidate in national and local election, the candidate must have Thai nationality by birth. The government recognizes that this has been a problematic issue since a large number of members of ethnic groups have sought Thai nationality through naturalization (rather than having the nationality by birth). A suggestion, therefore, has been made for revision of laws concerning specification of qualification requirements for election candidates.
