Makiko Kimura
Joint Statement by:

On Item 3: MDGs and Indigenous Peoples: Redefining the Goals

Thank you, Madam Chair.

We support the Asian Caucus statement.

I speak on behalf of Shimin Gaikou Centre, several other NGOs based in Japan, and nineteen Asian Indigenous Peoples Organisations regarding the recent development on Japan's ODA (Official Development Aid) reform and their potential impacts on indigenous peoples.

The Government of Japan, in its ODA reform plan, expressed that they would strengthen its ODA to the developing countries. South and Southeast Asian sub-regions remain as major target in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Although we would like to welcome the interest of the Japanese government to achieve the MDGs, we wish to express our concern on the impact of the projects funded and initiated by JBIC and JICA, as an NGO working closely with Asian indigenous peoples.

It was also decided that the ECA part of JBIC would be merged into the newly established public financial institution to be operational by February 2008. Unlike ODA, the funding component of Export Credit Agency is not related to MDGs but more to support and promote the interests of private sectors in Japan such as Japanese corporations. Thus Japanese government and JBIC have less jurisdiction on projects.
supported by the ECAs but with adverse impacts to indigenous peoples. Hence, there is a need to improve regulations of the new ECA part of JBIC to make it accountable to the adverse impacts of its projects especially to indigenous peoples.

In the past, Japan’s public money being used as ODA and by ECA in funding many projects in other countries caused negative impacts on the indigenous peoples, notably the construction of large-scale dams, such as Narmada in India and San Roque in Philippines. These projects displaced large number of indigenous inhabitants in the area, and/or affected the livelihood of the larger number of people. As a result, the indigenous communities and their sustainable way of life have been destroyed tremendously. In spite of the expressed oppositions of affected indigenous communities, the Japanese Government has not seriously reviewed the impacts of its funded projects from the perspectives of the indigenous peoples’ rights. In particular, the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is now evolving as an international standard which has developed substantially in last 20 years. Japanese Government still continue to fund the projects without the consent of affected indigenous communities. These are Salween dam in Burma, Kelau dam in Malaysia, Lam Ta Khong Pump Storage Project in Thailand, and ongoing projects on San Roque in Philippines, Malea Dam and Sulewana Dam in Indonesia.

Considering the scale and the role of JBIC, it is appropriate that the Japanese government strengthens its existing environment policy to include the clear provisions on the recognition of the indigenous peoples’ rights and the principles and substance of FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent). This policy should be adopted by the merged body of JICA and JBIC, including the ECA component of Japanese funding. This is to avoid a double-standard in guidelines concerning Japanese funding of development projects and programmes.

The Government of Japan continues to express the importance of human security in its diplomacy. We believe that strengthening its standards which respects the rights of indigenous peoples, especially to FPIC, is the best way to demonstrate their commitment for promotion and protection of the human rights and human security in Japan’s ODA policies.

In this regard, we would like to propose that the Permanent Forum should include the following issues in its recommendations.
1. To reiterate the importance of recognising the rights of the indigenous peoples with particular reference to FPIC to bilateral donors and ECAs funding projects affecting indigenous peoples.

2. To recommend to bilateral donors and ECAs to adopt a policy on the indigenous peoples with clear provisions on FPIC.

3. To make a strong recommendation to governments with large-scale development funding, such as Japan, to adopt the above recommendations.

Thank you, Madam Chair.