

**First Session of the Permanent Forum for indigenous issues
United Nations Headquarters, New York
May 13 to 24, 2002**



**Item no. 5: General Statements on the Permanent Forum
Presentation by: Ms. Joan Carling
Chairperson, Cordillera Peoples Alliance**

The Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) celebrates with the rest of the indigenous peoples on the successful opening of the first session of the Permanent Forum on indigenous issues. It is indeed a big leap forward for indigenous peoples to have gained a wider space within the UN system. This is a milestone achievement, as we pay tribute and give due recognition and acknowledgement to all those who have struggled relentlessly and brought us to this higher level.

While we welcome the First session of the Permanent Forum, we are also aware of the big challenges put before us, in order to keep the momentum going for the recognition of our rights in the form of concrete actions. Given the mandate of the Permanent Forum, it is imperative for it to define specific steps and mechanisms in making the UN family adopt the draft Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. The recognition of our fundamental rights to land and self determination, must be central in the recommendations of the Permanent Forum.

The recommendations and actions of the Permanent Forum must take cognizance of the life and death struggles of indigenous communities around the world, and put a stop to the violence and oppression that continue to prevail as we are gathered here today. The Permanent Forum is expected to take strong recommendations to prevent the further exploitation and destruction of our land and resources. We shall collectively work together to uphold the interest and welfare of indigenous peoples at all times.

In order for the Permanent Forum to be able to effectively implement its tasks, it also need the support of the entire UN family for the a regular and sufficient budget allocation, and to have its own separate secretariat. We hope this will be addressed with urgency.

Finally, the Permanent Forum shall be able to develop a mechanism whereby the voices of the indigenous peoples at the grassroots level can be heard and carried forward in its recommendations. To achieve this, we propose for an active exchange of information from and to the grassroots level to the international level. It also requires a constant communication and interaction between the members of the Permanent Forum and indigenous communities, in order for it to bring the heart and soul of the indigenous peoples issues and struggles into the UN system.

In conclusion, let me extend our support to the members of the Permanent Forum, and we look forward to fruitful years of action for the recognition, promotion and defense of indigenous peoples rights.