

**TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS WORKING GROUP ON  
INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS  
21-25 July 2003  
Geneva, Switzerland**



**PRESENTATION ON AGENDA 4(b) PRINCIPAL THEME: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES  
AND GLOBALIZATION**

**By: Mr. Windel Bolinget, Secretary General, Cordillera Peoples Alliance**

Mr. Chairman, we welcome and appreciate the principal theme of this year's UNWGIP Session as "Indigenous Peoples and Globalization." The theme reflects the urgency to address the serious adverse impacts of globalization to indigenous peoples.

In spite of the growing opposition to large scale mining, the Philippine government is aggressively revitalizing the mining industry and prioritizing the building of more energy projects to attract foreign investments. In fact, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is soon to approve a National Minerals Policy meant to propel faster the implementation of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 which totally liberalized the Philippine mining industry resulting to the rapacious plunder of ancestral lands and destruction of the environment of indigenous peoples. It claims to promote sustainable and responsible mining as well as environmental protection is a bare face lie only meant to deceive the public.

Our own concrete experience for long a time taught us that corporate and large scale mining did not push the country's economic development and prosperity. Massive large-scale mining displaced and deprived traditional small-scale miners of inter-generational livelihood and led to the destruction of fertile lands, depletion of water resources and caused environmental problems. As mining operations are mostly in indigenous territories, indigenous peoples bear the brunt of the destruction of their lands and plunder of their resources. In the Cordillera, river systems were polluted due to toxic mine waste disposal as in the case of the Abra River and Agno River.

As of May 2003, of the total land area of the Cordillera of 1.8 million, 433,377,3816 hectares are covered by mining applications already being processed for approval while applications for more than 13,0000 hectares of mineral land has already been approved. In addition to these are areas already ravaged by existing mining operations for several decades and past mining activities.

Mr. Chairman, it is condemnable that the Philippine government and mining companies only think of their interests by pursuing more massive and destructive mining operations, instead of addressing first outstanding issues such as rehabilitation of mined-out areas and polluted rivers, compensation of adversely affected communities and serious recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples over their land and resources. In fact, indigenous peoples across the country have long been struggling against destructive mining in their territories and continue to press for the genuine recognition of their collective rights not only in words but in practice.

Globalization has not spared our major rivers from destructive and gigantic dam projects. The Philippine government inaugurated the San Roque Dam on May 2003 despite serious issues on livelihood of displaced farmers and gold-panners and compensation of

adversely affected communities. Likewise, other dam projects in the Cordillera may still proceed such as the Matuno Dam at the boundary of Nueva Vizcaya and Ifugao, the Agbulo dam in Apayao and the Binongan dam in Abra. All these dam projects will adversely affect the indigenous peoples like the Ayangnan and Tawali, the Agta's and the Tinggians with dislocation, the loss of livelihood sources and community conflicts of the upstream and down stream people. We strongly believe that one big reason why these projects are being pushed for foreign investment is because huge funds can be a source of corruption, more than these projects are actually needed. There are other ways to meet energy needs, without causing tremendous economic, social and environmental adverse impacts.

Mr. Chairman, we firmly believe that the full recognition of the collective rights of indigenous peoples on their ancestral lands and resources and the genuine respect of their inherent right to self determination is very urgent. Unless these crucial issues are not seriously addressed, environmental disasters and social problems related to mining and energy projects will never end.

Mr. Chairman, with sense of urgency, we humbly submit the following recommendations:

1. To undertake a study on the impact of multinational and transnational mining companies on indigenous territories. Such a study will be the basis of developing a mechanism that will ensure corporate accountability of national and transnational companies and private and public utilities, as well as providing a rights-based development framework.
2. To recommend a moratorium on large-scale mining, large dams and other destructive projects in indigenous territories until mechanisms addressing outstanding issues are set, especially on compensation and rehabilitation of devastated communities.
3. To recommend that projects affecting indigenous peoples can only be undertaken within the framework of the full recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples over their land and resources including their free and prior informed consent as well as the transparency and accountability of companies and investors.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a vertical line extending downwards from the center.