



PHILIPPINES

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement delivered by
H.E. TEODORO L. LOCSIN, Jr.
Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations

**During the High-Level Event to Mark the 10th Anniversary of the UN Declaration
on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Adoption
United Nations Headquarters, New York, 25 April 2017**

Mr. President,

Ten years ago, my predecessor, former Chief Justice then Permanent Representative Hilario Davide was tasked by the President of the General Assembly to act as facilitator of the last stretch of negotiations on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

He accepted the task with the thought of the Declaration's impact on the millions of indigenous peoples of the Philippines and the hundreds of millions more around the world whose rights to their identity, distinct way of life, and traditional lands would finally gain recognition. But the adoption of the Declaration by the UN General Assembly faced delays, even after the imprimatur given by the UN Human Rights Council to the declaration in June of 2006. Urgent reforms do have a tendency to drip. But finally protracted process culminated in the adoption by the General Assembly on September 13, 2007 of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples— UNDRIP with no pun intended.

Today, the Philippines reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of UNDRIP, a commitment long antedating UN initiatives in the field, for my country has never scorned but rather sought avidly to rediscover and preserve its native roots. The 1987 Philippine Constitution recognized the political autonomy of indigenous communities in the country, their right to life, liberty and happiness in accordance with their ancient ways of life. An enabling law followed not long after. The Philippine Development Plan for 2017-2022 includes an aggressive awareness of indigenous peoples' rights, the primacy of their indigenous systems of justice, and their political empowerment through mandatory representation in local legislative councils. The power to shape their lives in accordance with their customs was put back in their hands.

This year, the Philippines launched the Philippine Indigenous Peoples Ethnography Program. Its objective is to complete the titling of remaining ancestral domains and lands for the principal injustice has not been prejudice but plain commercial avidity for indigenous possessions. A census is mandated of indigenous population and housing inside and outside ancestral domains. Ancestral domain sustainable development and protection plans for remaining areas are being formulated, along with how government agencies can usefully contribute. Provision is made for the careful opening up of ancestral domains to investment, always with the conformity of indigenous communities, and with due regard for ecological concerns and cultural integrity. Above all what indigenous people want and not what others have in mind is paramount.

Thank you for your kind attention.