

Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines

ORAL STATEMENT – APRIL 25, 2017

By: Commissioner Roberto Eugenio T. Cadiz:

The Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHRP) expresses its gratitude for having been given the opportunity to speak during the 16th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

We wish to apprise this August Body about the mandate of the CHRP as our country's National Human Rights Institution in regard to promoting the rights of our Indigenous Peoples.

Among others, our mandate include: (a) the monitoring of the human rights situation of IP communities that are impacted by mining and agribusiness activities; and (b) issuance of human rights advisories, setting forth the standards expected from duty-bearers in respecting, protecting and fulfilling IP rights. In fulfilling this mandate, we look at the standards set under the Philippine Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997, as well as the the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, among other applicable references.

Despite the formal recognition in our domestic laws that IPs have four bundles of rights, namely, the rights to: (1) ancestral domains and lands; (2) self-governance and empowerment; (3) social justice and human rights; and (4) cultural integrity, our Indigenous Peoples continue to be ignored, exploited, and marginalized.

More effort must be exerted by the Philippine government, not only to preserve the cultural heritage of our Indigenous Peoples, but to protect them from the onslaught of developmental aggression.

In this regard, the Philippine government must ensure at the highest possible level that the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of our Indigenous Peoples are obtained, not only in form, but in substance, on all matters involving our Indigenous Peoples' rights and interests.

The failure of government in this area has consigned our Indigenous Peoples to abject poverty, which, in turn, is fuelling insurgency in our ancestral domains and causing displacement of our Indigenous Peoples from their ancestral lands.