



PHILIPPINES

Check Against Delivery

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR HILARIO G. DAVIDE, JR.
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE PHILIPPINES TO THE UNITED NATIONS
SEVENTH SESSION OF THE PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS
ISSUES ON THE THEME "CLIMATE CHANGE, BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY
AND LIVELIHOODS: THE STEWARDSHIP ROLE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
AND NEW CHALLENGES"**

Madame Chairperson,

At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the Philippine delegation, to join other delegations in congratulating you on your reelection. Because you are from the Philippines, the Philippine delegation is proud of you for your reelection. You have given great honor to the Philippines.

There can be no dispute at all that the theme of this session, "**Climate Change, Biocultural Diversity and Livelihoods: The Stewardship Role of Indigenous Peoples and New Challenges**", is decisively relevant and apt. Indigenous peoples have a very significant role to perform on the subjects covered by the theme. Let me forthwith state that the Creator of the universe has made a compact with the indigenous peoples, and not with any others, in respect of Mother Earth. It was to them the Creator first bequeathed the land in the nations, which were to be their home. The compact is a covenant, which imposes on the indigenous peoples a solemn stewardship duty to protect and preserve the land for themselves and the generations yet to come. This is the beginning of the principle of intergenerational responsibility or equity vis-a-vis of Mother Earth and the environment. The Constitution of the Philippines now directs the State to protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature

The Philippines is adversely affected by climate change. It has brought to it increased incidences of tropical cyclones and rising sea levels, deaths to peoples, and incalculable damage to agriculture, coastal and marine ecosystems and forests. Natural disasters caused by climate change exacerbate the situation of the thousands of indigenous people in the Philippines who live in areas difficult to reach such as the highest mountain ranges and on islands. Among others,

PHILIPPINE MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

556 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10036 • TEL. (212) 764-1300 • FAX (212) 840-8602 1

they increase their vulnerability to disease and affect their physical, social and psychological well-being.

In order to insure that the devastating effects of climate change are mitigated on not just our indigenous population, but the entire country, the Philippines has taken several steps to reverse the trend. The Philippines was among the first countries to sign and ratify the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It signed the Convention in 1992 and ratified it in August 1994. Even before the Earth Summit in Rio, the Philippines already established an Inter-Agency Committee on Climate Change tasked to coordinate the efforts and activities of the Government on this issue. The Congress of the Philippines also passed the Clean Air Act of 1999. This law aims to protect the environment and advance the right of the people to clean air. A further testament of its strong commitment to fight climate change was the Philippines' ratification of the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC in October 2003.

The Philippines adheres to the overarching principle stated in Article 3.1 of the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol that all parties "should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind, on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities".

The Philippines believes that all countries can, and must, cooperate to address climate change through mitigation and to address its adverse effects through adaptation by the implementation of the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol. The Philippines remains committed to the full implementation of its legally binding obligations under the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol.

The Philippines welcomes, but notes with alarm, the recommendations of the UN Human Development Report of 2007/2008 on "Fighting Climate Change." We support the recommendations, especially those on climate change adaptation.

The Philippines has been empowering our people, especially our indigenous persons so that they will be able to adapt to climate change. They protect the ecosystem, particularly the remaining carbon sinks, our forests, which are crucial to the prevention of climate change. Our indigenous people have maintained the habitability of these forests for both humans and wild life.

In the Southeast Asian region, the Philippines is categorized as a Middle Income Country, but it remains excluded from the top 30 Carbon Dioxide emitters. The Philippines intends to remain excluded from this list. Our indigenous people together with the rest of the nation will be key actors in making sure this trend is maintained, thus preventing climate change.

On the matter of biodiversity, the Philippines is one of the few countries in the world that are both a mega-diverse and a biodiversity hotspot. The Philippines is recognized as among the top 17 richest nations that collectively claim within their boundaries two-thirds of the earth's biological diversity, and with it more than half of its biodiversity found nowhere else on earth. The Philippines is one of the most important countries in the world for conserving diversity of life on earth. Thus, Philippine biodiversity forms part of our global heritage.

In order to preserve the vast riches that have been endowed to it by Nature, the Philippines ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in October 1993. The Convention entered into force in December of the same year. The Philippines also signed the Cartagena Protocol to the CBD in May 2000 and ratified on November 2004. The protocol entered into force in the Philippines in January 2007.

As a result of these international commitments on the protection of biodiversity the Philippines established the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) to insure the fulfillment of the country's obligations under the CBD. In 1992 the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act was passed and became the basis for the establishment and management of protected areas in the country. Then the President enacted Executive Order No. 514 which created the National Biosafety Framework and which strengthened the National Committee on Biosafety.

The Indigenous people in the Philippines play a major role in the protection and preservation of the country's rich and vast biodiverse areas since they live in or near these areas. Such a task is inherent in their stewardship duty I earlier mentioned. The Government, in cooperation with local government units and NGOs, is teaching local communities, including the indigenous people, how to protect and preserve the many biodiversity hotspots.

The Philippines recognizes the importance for indigenous peoples to have a livelihood so that they may help in protecting the country's biodiverse environment and also have the means to take care of themselves so that the harmful effects of climate change on them can be mitigated or reduced and that they may be able to adapt to it. The Philippines has consistently upheld the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples. No less than its fundamental law, the Constitution of 1987, recognizes the rights of indigenous cultural communities within the framework of national unity and development. This commitment is reaffirmed in the national law on indigenous peoples' rights, known as the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act, considered as one of the world's strongest legislations advancing and protecting the welfare of indigenous peoples.

The Philippines is a signatory to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Back home the Government has instituted policies and

actions to give flesh and blood to its commitment to its many indigenous citizens, based on the universal principles of both human rights and development for marginalized communities. The implementation of the President's ten-point priority agenda is aimed at ensuring that the indigenous peoples of the Philippines are fully mainstreamed in the development process, and at the same time empowered as active agents of development.

Land lies at the core of the lives of the indigenous communities. Land is life. Thus, the Philippines is securing land tenure for them, in tandem with the implementation of a framework plan for the sustainable development and protection of ancestral domains. This is known as the Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan or ADSDPP. Each of the ADSDPPs were formulated by the indigenous cultural communities concerned with the help of the Philippine National Commission on Indigenous Persons. Each plan is an expression of the Indigenous cultural community's own vision of development for their respective ancestral domains.

Through the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, the Government also provides livelihood projects. These projects are reinforced by capacity-building programs and modules, such as entrepreneurial training, agro-industrial technology transfer, technical and financial cooperative assistance and social infrastructure support services.

Madame Chairperson, distinguished delegates and participants,

In closing, let me state that the Philippines is doing all it can to confront climate change, prevent or minimize its disastrous effects, protect biodiversity, and provide a livelihood for its indigenous population, among other things. It recognizes, as the United Nations does, that these disparate issues are irretrievably intertwined. Since these issues affect the entire world, they challenge all indigenous peoples to be unceasing in their toil to perform their solemn duty as stewards of the land the Creator has bequeathed to them as trustees or stewards thereof. In this regard, they must not fail. Neither must the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Having worked so hard for the approval of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, it must work with vim, vigor and vitality to fulfill the duty with which it is burdened under it.

Thank you Madame Chairperson.