

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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Agenda item 3: The Doctrine of Discovery: Its enduring impact on indigenous peoples and the right to redress for past conquests

~~Statement by Indigenous Women in Asia~~

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Mr. Chairperson, distinguished members of the Permanent Forum, Indigenous brothers and sisters,

The present neoliberal economic development paradigm is the current face of colonization in Asia today. It comes in the form of multinational corporations extracting everything: from minerals, oil, knowledge, sweat and blood from indigenous territories while waging war against us.

While they enjoy economic prosperity, we suffer from the plunder and loss of our ancestral lands and territories, sacred forests, ecosystems and environment, traditions and culture. It doesn't stop there. It has broken down our social structures, self-esteem and confidence towards one another. Our identities as indigenous peoples and dignity as human beings have been robbed off leaving us in poverty in mind and in spirit.

Mr. Chairperson,

Indigenous women are the most affected by these historic violence and discrimination - bearing the burden to nurture back our communities to heal ourselves from environmental violence, social injustice and cultural genocide. Moreover, state security forces have become tools to protect state interests and corporate greed. Militarization and state impunity have caused internal conflicts and countless human rights violations.

In Bangladesh for example, there are 66 incidents of violence against indigenous women reported in CHT between February 2007 – February 2012. Among these, 37 were raped and 6 were killed after being raped. There were also attempted rape on 24 women and 5 others were abducted. Just yesterday, May 9, an 11 year old girl have reportedly been raped and murdered in Longudu Upazila in Rangamati. In Pakistan, 8539 women, mostly indigenous, have reportedly been victims of violence in 2011. Among these, 705 were cases of honour killing, 827 rape, 610 domestic violence, 44 acid throwing, 2089 abductions and 1575 murder. In the Philippines, 2 young girls were recently raped by an element of the military deployed in a mining area in the Cordillera region. The cases of rape of Penan women in Sarawak by workers

of a logging company is a horrific reminder of the escalating violence against indigenous women and the inadequacies of state justice systems that failed to secure relief for survivors of sexual crimes.

We recommend to the Permanent Forum, UN agencies, States and indigenous peoples' organizations and communities:

1. We call on Asian states to fully and effectively discharge their functions as duty bearers including their commitment to the UNDRIP. Specifically, we call on Asian states to :
 - a) fully and effectively recognize indigenous peoples and implement the UNDRIP;
 - b) ensure the protection of the rights and wellbeing of indigenous women and their communities in any endeavor that affects their lands and lives;
 - c) stop militarization
2. We urge UN agencies to :
 - a) facilitate awareness raising and capacity building specific for indigenous women to understand their situations of marginalization and discrimination towards their empowerment;
 - b) support and enhance indigenous peoples' initiatives in combating gender discrimination and violence against indigenous women and girls;
 - c) ensure the rights and wellbeing of indigenous women and their communities including the right to FPIC , self-determination and participation in development and decision making;
 - d) for the UNFPA to facilitate data-dis-aggregation and the development of socio-economic and well-being indicators relevant to indigenous peoples and indigenous women;
 - e) for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the UN Human Rights Council to investigate the grave situation of violence against indigenous women and girls in the CHT, Bangladesh and the Penans in Sarawak, Malaysia;
 - f) That the UNPFII, with its broad mandate areas on indigenous issues, develop informational resources to raise awareness about international development policies and practice i.e economic globalization, free trade and deregulation which perpetuate domination and subjugation of indigenous peoples. Further, for the UNPFII to facilitate and ensure that UN agencies, financial institutions including the private sector are guided by a holistic approach which integrate indigenous peoples' and women's human rights, ecological and cultural values and sustainable, self- determined development .

3. We also call on indigenous communities and organizations to acknowledge and address discriminatory norms, laws and practices that impede women's full access and enjoyment of their human rights especially the right to participation, self-determination and decision making.

Mr. Chairperson,

We are not against development. All we want is that development should be appropriate for our needs and wellbeing. We urge our governments to uphold the principles of self-determined development and human rights-based and ecosystems-based approach to development. Any development initiative can only be sustained when there is a sense of ownership by the peoples through effective participation. Participation to us relates to our right to determine what kind of development we need and the courses of action to achieve it. It involves our free and prior informed consent as well as our right to benefit from the processes and results of development .

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