

13th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)
Agenda Item 5: Half Day Discussion on the Asia Region
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on behalf of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Caucus

Thank You Madam Chair and congratulations to your election as Chair of this Forum.

Ennak man kablaawan (I extend my greetings)
Kakabsat Nainsigudan (Indigenous Brothers, Sisters and everyone)
Tumaktakder mangilablan (Standing and Fighting)
Ti Daga Biag Ken Karbengan (for our land Life and rights)

I am Julius Ceasar Daguitan speaking on behalf of the Asia Pacific Indigenous Youth Network (APIYN), along with the AIPC and GIYC. I am grateful to present to you a statement for Agenda Item 5: Half-day Discussion on the Asia Region.

Indigenous Youth and Children have the inherent and collective right for education given in their own language and culture and have the right to full and effective participation to any matter affecting them as was also enshrined in the United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and other UN Declarations and Conventions. Yet there is no involvement of Indigenous youth in policy making at country and regional levels.

Indigenous Youth and Children are said to be inheritors of the rich lessons and culture and are the future stewards of our natural resources. But what future will they inherit if the land and territories protected by their ancestors are being taken away by their government, big corporations and transnational corporations for dams, mining, plantations, energy projects, and others? Throughout history we have not seen any benefit for indigenous peoples in areas where such projects have operated, but rather these development aggressions are being pursued for the benefit of large multinational corporate bodies, which cause widespread displacement, environmental degradation and alienation of indigenous communities. But still application of such projects are increasing in Indigenous Peoples' land and territories as if our governments and companies have not learned anything from these experiences.

Indigenous Youth and Children have no/less access to quality education since most of the schools are located in the town centers. The lack of support of the states and continuous budget cuts for education lead to a very expensive education that most indigenous peoples' families cannot afford. Lessons are taught in English or in the national language not in the IP language and therefore lessens Indigenous Youth and Children participation at schools. This system aided to loss of many indigenous languages in Nepal, India, and Philippines. Moreover there is no or very little inclusion of the Culture and glorious history of indigenous Peoples in the curriculum of countries. We appreciate the inclusion of implementation of a mother tongue based and/or IP education in the curricula of Indonesia, Bangladesh, Philippines and Malaysia. But we also criticize the lack of guidelines, modules and technical and financial support for its implementation.

In many countries in Asia, human rights education is not or seldom taught in the mainstream school systems. Therefore a lot Indigenous Peoples youth and children do not know their rights and when their rights are violated, they are not able to defend themselves. This is especially a serious challenge imposed on Indigenous youth, women and children. Also, when the mainstream society has no understanding of human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the rights wouldn't be possible to truly implement.

Our good, traditional and sustainable practices are weakly transferred from the older generations. The continuous commercialization of culture also contributes to the fast disintegration of our culture. Our culture is being viewed as a commodity and with it comes the bastardization of our culture. It is used to attract tourists for profit that only few will benefit from, not the whole community. For the sake of profit, our songs, dances and traditional clothing are inappropriately presented. Others would also take advantage of the patenting laws to individually own the patterns, process, and designs which were used by our ancestors since time immemorial.

Compounding these issues, heavy militarization of our communities bring grave human rights violations. Military and paramilitary continuously encroach on houses, occupy schools and other public structures as their camps, and threaten the IP communities. Countless indigenous youth and children are being displaced, or evacuated due to the military operations. Rape of young indigenous women by Military Forces in Bangladesh, Philippines and other countries is not yet resolved; the rapists are not punished and no justice enacted. State forces are tagging or vilifying indigenous peoples' organizations, leaders, members and advocates as enemies of states. The recent killing of Freddie Fermin Ligiw, one of the indigenous youth leaders in the Philippines, along with four other Indigenous persons under the Oplan Bayanihan is a manifestation of undermining the right to life of Indigenous peoples by military and paramilitary groups.

The Indigenous youth in Asia therefore states and recommends the following:

1. For the Permanent Forum and other UN bodies to help the indigenous youth forward these concerns and recommendations to the states.
2. For governments to ensure the full and effective participation of the indigenous youth on matters affecting them at the local, national, regional and international levels. One example would be to establish and financially support an Indigenous Youth organization or body.
3. For the states and multinational corporations to recognize their accountability as the major contributors to the degradation of the environment and upheaval of our communities. With this we urge UN agencies to work with states to fully stop large scale mining operations, massive logging, construction of multi-purpose and hydro-electric dams, plantations and other monoculture agriculture, nuclear plants, oil exploration and production in our territories, as well as abolish false and market-based solutions to the global crises. And ensure the FPIC process are followed.
4. For World Bank and other UN funding institutions to stop funding corporations or projects that may encroach or threaten our Indigenous Lands and territories and violate our collective rights.

5. For UNICEF, UNESCO, UN Women to work with states to stop budget cuts and the privatization of education and to increase the budget allotted for education and to allocate 6% of their GDP to Education as stated in the Dhaka Declaration.
6. For UN agencies and states to promote a pro-indigenous peoples education. And support programs such as IP and mother tongue based education, which are supported, initiated and guided by IP. States shall provide financial and technical support; to review the modules, books and other educational materials that thwart the histories of Indigenous Peoples' struggles and values. This shall be with participation of Indigenous Peoples. Educational materials and curricula shall include our indigenous culture, knowledge and glorious histories.
7. We call for government and relevant UN bodies and programs to include human rights education into the mainstream education system to ensure both Indigenous and Non-indigenous have the knowledge of human rights and understand all the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
8. We denounce the commercialization and bastardization of our culture. We urge our elders and indigenous families to teach their children their indigenous cultures, practices, values and languages. We will continue our campaign and activities on the revitalization of our indigenous cultures. And we call on the states, UN bodies and concerned private institutions to support these initiatives of the youth.
9. For the mainstream media to stop using indigenous cultures inappropriately in their shows and programs. Instead, they should promote the proper culture of the IPs and their actual concerns. We recommend the permanent forum to have a half-day discussion regarding Discrimination of Indigenous Peoples in the media.
10. To stop the militarization of Indigenous Peoples communities; to end the vilification and criminalization of our leaders, organizations and collective actions; and give justice and indemnification to all the victims of human rights violations. We recommend the appointment of a special Rapporteur on the impacts of Militarization and include these impacts in future studies.
11. We urge the UN bodies and states to develop concrete binding policies and enforcing mechanisms on those who do not meet the goals of achieving sustainable development consistent to the perspectives of the Indigenous Peoples.

Rest assured we, the indigenous youth, will continue educating and organizing ourselves, and are willing to work hand in hand with other sectors, agencies, states in crafting a better society and the future we want.

Ituloy tayo ti dangadang (We must continue the struggles)

Rinugian ti Kaapuan (Started by our ancestors)

Agtrabaho para naranyag masakbayan (We will work for a better future)

Paraumaruno nga kapututan (for our next generation)

Agyamanak Unay. Agbiag (Thank You Very Much and Longlive)