



PAGRARANGA NG AETA NG PINATUBO, INC.

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IPs RIGHTS TO DEVELOPMENT AND SELF DETERMINATION

Indeed, it is a great pleasure to, once again, meet the distinguished participants and representatives of the different countries of the world in this assembly. This representation is from the Republic of the Philippines, particularly belonging to the Aeta tribe, the primary victims of the historic Mt. Pinatubo eruptions. Let me emphasize; therefore, that my topic would certainly premise on the present development of the IPs in the Philippines.

It is the first time in the Philippines history that the rights of the IPs have been embodied into our laws, under Republic Act No. 8371 otherwise known as Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997. This law has suffered set back in its implementation, as it was contested before the Philippine Supreme Court on its Constitutional basis. Fortunately, in December 2000, the rights of the IPs has gained triumph when it was declared legal and constitutional.

The Philippine Indigenous Peoples Rights Act have include four (4) major rights consistent to the Constitution and applicable norms and principles in the Philippines. These are the right to Ancestral Domains, Rights to Self-Governance and Empowerment, Social Justice and Human Rights, and Cultural Integrity. These rights have component sub-rights necessary for the fulfillment of the inalienable human rights and fundamental freedoms of the IPs.

We consider the passage of this law a concrete step towards the recognition, protection and promotion of the rights of the IPs, including our rights to development and self-determination. However, it is worthy to note that we are still concern at the existence of serious obstacles to development, as well as to the complete fulfillment of the IPs human beings and of peoples. The right to development as a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well being of the entire IP population on the basis of their active, free, and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of the benefits resulting there from, remained to be seen.

The right of the IPs to self-determination, by virtue of which they have the right freely to determine their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development, do not have a clear policy yet for its implement.

Historically, the resistance of the Philippine IPs had forced them to remain in a stagnant of poverty and backwardness through the neglect, exploitation of the colonialists. The IPs have taken their destiny into their own hands for long years of endeavors. Though the rule of colonialism in the country has over, yet, many of our political and government leaders can hardly comprehend the need to recognize the rights to development and self-determination of the IPs.

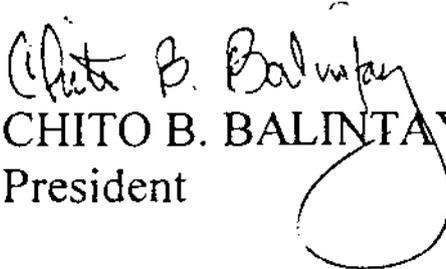
Besides, there are other internal obstacles or conditions unfavorable to the realization of the right to development and self-determination of the IPs. The Philippine has, yet to recover from its political crisis. It shall be recalled that early last year 2000, Peoples Power 11 has deposed from power a disgrace President, and therefore, unification of political forces and the citizenry are the major concern of our government. Secondly, our country has been affected by economic crisis in the Asian

Region, and the existence of extremist in the society. There are major priorities of the Government that has to be undertaken, and we fear that the implementation of our rights to development and self-determination will not be given importance.

Our Philippine IPs have a long period of sufferings from social injustices. We have an effective measures being established, however, the realization of the opportunities has yet to come. Our rights to Ancestral Domain that would lead us to economic, social and cultural development have never been realized. We have to wait for good Samaritans to help us funding for our needed programs for development. Our children have been way behind from educational, health and other social developments.

With this situation, I would like to take these opportunities to ask the help of each and every participants, most particularly, this assembly, for ensuring the realization of the Philippine IPs the right to development and self-determination. I ask you to support our economic and social programs that should liberate us from the bondage of social injustices and underdevelopment.

Thank you and good day.


CHITO B. BALINTAY
President