

United Nations Second Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
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Mr. Chairman,

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to have the floor and I congratulate you for being re-elected to chair this forum. Brothers and sisters, distinguished members of this forum, delegates, member states ladies and gentlemen. Mayat ja akew son sikayon emin a good day to each and everyone.

I am Franklin Almoza from the Republic of the Philippines, a former fellow under the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR). I am an Ibaloi from the mountains of Cordillera. I would like to take this opportunity to give my gratitude to the Voluntary Fund who sponsored me for being able to here to attend this second permanent forum. In behalf of Indigenous People's from the Philippines we would like to give thanks to the Special Rapporteur Rodolfo Staven Hagen who have his official visit in the Philippines last year and that we hope that all of the findings will be made in his report. We hope the special rapportuer will make recommendation and take action for the proper United Nations agencies and for our government to reflect on.

Ladies and gentlemen we are talking about our economic and social development, in which I would like to point out the importance of land for us. Without our land we cannot survive. Land it is the one that bind us together for many years that taught us how to live in harmony with the environment. Which it is then our duty to protect from its destruction and preserve its sacredness. In the Philippines most of the Indigenous Peoples source of livelihood is agriculture, hunting, fishing and mining. Our government have approved laws that affects our well being for our development, specially this mining act of 1995. Under this law, we were being denied to have access to use our land. In 1997, there was the launching of a mining operation within my community, unaware of the operation by the company. We did stage a human barricade but no to avail. The mining company have used there money to penetrate our area by filling a case against us. They have seek for the help of the court to disperse us and they succeed. As a result for this victory by the mining company, we were being put to jail. Children who are the front liners of the barricade, elders, youth and all the members of the community mourn for what happen. The denial

of our right to our land have resulted to our disunity culturally and socially. We could not move for our development, considering that majority are not educated. We merely rely to live for being a miner and farming was also affected due to lack of water. The water vein was already touch underground resulting to the waters to submerge. Now that the mining company have take in control of our land, what could be our future? The operation of this bulk mining can instantly take all the minerals in a short span of time leaving us empty handed. Which our government gets the worth through receiving taxes. But what about us, the indigenous people's who are directly affected by mining operation? Are we receiving something in exchange for the destruction of our land? How about for the future to come? if we will extract the minerals our selves it could take for many generations for us to survive and thereby promoting for our economic development.

At present we are still attending the criminal and civil case filed against us by the mining company. My father who was our leader have died last year. My father fought to stop the operation and he was just about to be arrested but because he filed bail he have his freedom. Just imagine how patient we are attending this hearing in court, we have been attending almost seven years already. Instead of looking forward to the future, we fear of what could happen for us by the case filed against us. We could not move for a change. It is difficult to because we are considered by government a "squatter" in our own land. We are losing our hope and fear that we will loss or land because how could we fight in the court? they have already taken our source of livelihood.

I would also like to present the issue that the company is applying also for water rights this year,yet without our knowledge and without being informed of their plan. What is the government doing is killing the indigenous people's little by little by taking all what we have. Everybody deserves to live and we have the right to live.

Yes, the Philippine Government have approved the Indigenous People's Right Act (IPRA) but it doesn't mean that it is for our good because the bureaucrats are still the ones who decide. The status of the IPRA at present is not even being implemented or respected by the government. The government is not supportive of the IPRA. There's no budget allotted for the implementing agency the National Commission on Indugenuous People's to be efficient. Mr. Chairman, the issue that I have outlined such as the implementation of the IPRA, need to be addressed. We the Ibaloi people ask the Permanent Forum to encourage the government of the Philippines to take action and honor our rights as indigenous people's with this concerns I am asking this forum to consider our issue for this is not far from the experience

of other indigenous People like me present here today.
Salamat ja ebadeg, thank you very much.

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