



PHILIPPINES

Statement by

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Second Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

**Agenda Item 4
Mandated Areas:
Economic and Social Development, Environment, Health, Human Rights,
Culture and Education**

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Mr. President,

At the outset, please allow me, on behalf of the Philippine delegation, to congratulate you on your election and to express our confidence in the successful conclusion of our work under your guidance.

We look to this Forum to provide expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues beyond human rights, by considering economic and social development, culture, environment, education and health issues, as mandated in ECOSOC resolution 2000/22. It is also our hope that this body will generate discussions on addressing the special needs of indigenous children and youth.

Mr. President,

There are over 900 indigenous peoples from all regions in the world. The Philippines is home to 45 of them. When combined, they constitute a significant segment of Philippine society. In this regard, Philippine Government has taken concrete measures to mainstream them into society while preserving their dignity and culture.

Our important measure has been the passage of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997, which includes provisions to promote the rights of indigenous cultural communities within the framework of national unity and development and to protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to their ancestral lands so as to ensure their economic, social and cultural well being. It also recognizes the right of self-governance and the use of customary law to resolve disputes.

The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) was created in 1997 to serve as the mechanism for coordinating the implementation of the law and thus ensuring the civil, political, social and cultural rights of members of indigenous cultural communities.

The Philippine Government has also adopted other policies and programmes, as well as enacted legislation to address the concerns of the indigenous cultural communities. A number of Government agencies are directly involved in this area.

Mr. President,

Social and Economic Development

The Forum should continue to give utmost importance to ensuring respect for the rights of indigenous peoples in the planning and implementation of economic and social development projects. Toward this end, the Philippines has taken steps to include the voice of indigenous peoples in the planning and implementation of socio-economic projects such as the pilot project named Social Integration for Indigenous Groups (SINING) which empowers indigenous cultural communities in rediscovering and strengthening their knowledge, systems and practices suitable for the management of development projects.

Other government agencies have responded through the establishment of a sex-disaggregated database on indigenous cultural communities, as a necessary instrument for research and more importantly, as a reference for future policy planning. Such is the case for the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development 1995-2025.

Environment

We also look to this Forum as a means of encouraging environmental and sustainable development models incorporating genuine partnership between member states and indigenous peoples.

In preparing a blueprint for sustainable development, the Philippine government has recognized indigenous cultural communities as equal partners in shaping, crafting and implementing development programs as well as in creating a healthy and safe living environment.

Furthermore, my government recognizes the need to strengthen indigenous peoples' organizations and cooperatives on environmental and sustainable development concerns in order to strengthen their role as major stakeholders in development.

Mr. President,

Health

We believe our dialogue on health should focus on plans and strategies to address the health needs of indigenous children and the youth. This will ensure that all indigenous peoples and cultures have access to direct health care which, in turn, is sensitive to traditional health care practices.

The Philippine Government has undertaken several efforts to improve the health concerns of the indigenous cultural communities, particularly children. The Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act ensures that children from indigenous cultural communities shall not be subjected to any form of discrimination in the provision of health and nutrition services.

The Government has also implemented health and nutrition and early childhood development programs with international organizations such as UNICEF and other non-governmental organizations.

Human Rights

Dialogue between member states and indigenous peoples at the national and international levels on the human rights of indigenous peoples and the promotion and protection of their cultural diversity must be encouraged.

The Philippine Commission on Human Rights and the Presidential Human Rights Committee are addressing, preventing, investigating, monitoring and prosecuting violations of human rights in the context of indigenous cultural communities. Our national laws protect indigenous cultural communities, and provide compensation and indemnification for human rights victims and/or their families. The children of indigenous cultural groups are protected against all forms of discrimination. Penalties are prescribed for violations.

The "bottoms-up" approach is used in developing policies and strategies for the promotion and enjoyment of rights of indigenous communities in the Philippines. To preserve the identity of the indigenous cultural community children, a series of regional and national consultations among indigenous elders and children have been conducted. In this regard, the Philippines hosted the National Indigenous Peoples Children

and Youth Festival (NIPCYF) sponsored by UNICEF and the Children and Youth Foundation of the Philippines (CYFP), in November 2000. In this event, indigenous children drafted policies and proposed programmes for the protection, promotion and enjoyment of their rights as indigenous cultural communities.

Education

Indigenous children and youth should also have access to quality education. Education to indigenous children and youth should include respect for their heritage as well as an understanding of their cultural identity, language and values.

The Philippine Department of Education has coordinated its work with non-governmental organizations to develop alternative systems of education for children belonging to indigenous cultural communities in order to ensure that the values and aspirations of these communities are reflected in educational programmes.

Mr. President,

My government looks forward to exchanging experiences and information with other delegations during our meeting. We hope that the enthusiasm emanating from this meeting on important issues affecting indigenous peoples are translated into specific recommendations aimed at enhancing and improving the lives of indigenous peoples.

Thank you.