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PHILIPPINES

Intervention by
H.E. Mrs. Cecilia B. Rebong
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Philippines
to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva

27th session of the Human Rights Council
Annual Half-day Panel discussion on the rights of Indigenous Peoples:
The promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples in disaster risk reduction, and
prevention and preparedness initiatives
17 September 2014

Thank you, Mr. President.

As a country that is prone to natural disasters because of its geographical location, and deeply cognizant of the fact that natural calamities can result in loss of lives, immeasurable damage to properties and livelihoods, thus shaking the economic and social rights of the population, the Philippines has always taken a proactive approach in reducing the risks posted by these natural calamities.

It is vital for us to ensure that the promotion of human rights of all members of the population, and humanitarian law principles, are integrated into disaster risk management, including in pre-disaster mitigation and preparedness measures, emergency relief and rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

The Philippines' concrete commitment to making sure that the human rights of its people are protected in times of calamities is manifested by the establishment of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council or NDRRMC, tasked to formulate a national disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) framework. This Council is composed of almost all government agencies, the Office of the President, local government units, civil society organizations, and private sector.

In the aftermath of recent calamities, there were many lessons learned, which include the realization of the importance of being better prepared for disasters that are becoming more intense as a result of climate change. Our Government is now looking at how to make local communities more involved in disaster risk reduction, preparedness, prevention, and resiliency programs, particularly the most vulnerable members of the population, including indigenous peoples.

This panel is a valuable opportunity for letting the voice of affected communities be heard amidst the noise of the storm. We understand that we do not have all the solutions now. But for us, acknowledging the need for more concerted action is an important first step in the right direction. We see this as an opportunity for cooperation. It is in this light that we would like to request the panel to elaborate on examples of how other States are able to facilitate greater involvement and participation of indigenous communities in disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response, taking into account their human rights, especially the rights of those that are considered more at risk as a result of their current vulnerable situations, such as indigenous women and children. As we value the contributions of civil society, we would also appreciate the views of the panel on the role that civil society can play to support Government efforts in this area.

Thank you, Mr. President.