

Statement of Commissioner Roberto Eugenio T. Cadiz  
Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHRP)  
16th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
1 May 2017. New York.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHRP) endeavours to engage as partners all human rights defenders - whether as individuals, groups, or associations - for the elimination of all violations of human rights, especially in regard to vulnerable sectors, such as Indigenous Peoples, in accordance with the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Human Rights defenders in the Philippines are always in danger of being killed, tortured, or subjected to other forms of human rights violations, resulting from their work. Often, they are tagged as criminals, prior to being subjected to these abuses.

The CHRP has recently created a Center which serves as focal point for IP human rights defenders at the national level, with mandate to engage with state authorities and recommend inter-agency solutions to IP issues.

Among the strategies adopted by the Commission is the facilitation of tripartite dialogues among IPs and their Human Rights Defenders, government agencies, and the Commission on Human Rights.

When strategically applied in proper cases, this mechanism serves three purposes, namely: (a) monitoring; (b) prevention; and (c) remediation. This mechanism also helps the Commission to evaluate the human rights situation of IP communities, especially where human rights defenders are at risk.

Virtually unempowered and unprotected by government, our Indigenous Peoples are largely helpless in the face of developmental aggression from big corporations that are now taking place in the ancestral domains of our Indigenous Peoples. We hasten to add, too, that some of the rights of our Indigenous Peoples are likewise in danger of being violated, if not already being violated, wittingly or unwittingly, by those who seek to assist them, but who might have other agenda or issues not necessarily *on all fours* with those concerning our Indigenous Peoples.

Thus, we continue to call on all our duty-bearers to help empower our IPs to be able to defend themselves by supporting their establishment of an

educational system that respects and incorporates all of the wisdom contained in their centuries-old indigenous cultures.

Thank you.