

WEST PAPUA PEOPLES' FRONT

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Statement of the West Papua Peoples' Front
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Madame Chairperson,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you and the honourable members of the Working Group. We congratulate you with the achievements during the Working Group process which, among others, has served to raise the visibility of indigenous issues throughout the world. We are representing the Papuan peoples in West Papua, the indigenous peoples of the western part of the Melanesian island of New Guinea. This is the tenth time that Papuans have the opportunity to attend a session of the Working Group.

We are here to contribute to the effectuation of an appropriate standard-setting by the United Nations system and other international bodies, regarding the rights and lives of indigenous peoples. In West Papua, the interventions from outside in the form of extractive enterprises, market economy and immigration are numerous and beyond the control of the indigenous peoples. Any opposition or even questions from the indigenous peoples regarding these developments are branded as subversive and severely punished.

INDONESIAN AUTHORITIES

Since 1963 we are ruled by Indonesia. Although we are a distinct people with a distinct history and culture and living in a distinct territory, the Indonesian authorities do not recognize us as such. It is forbidden to relate to our people as Papuans; we are to be called "Irianese". This term takes away the distinction between us and the Indonesian immigrants.

In 1993, the Indonesian government refused to acknowledge the UN Year of Indigenous Peoples, declaring it instead the Year of the Environment. This year, 1994, is Indonesia's Year of the Traditional People. The government's refusal to adopt the term indigenous peoples has already caused an outcry within Indonesia itself.

The policies regarding the indigenous peoples fall under the programs for "suku terasing" or "masyarakat terasing", meaning programs for isolated groups. Indigenous peoples are seen as backward and primitive, and must be uplifted to the Indonesian standard of civilisation. The Indonesian State Minister for National Development, Ginandjar Kartasasmita, defended the programs by saying: "They are not intended in any way to harm the traditional communities. Contrary to what observers may think, we do not want any part of our society to be left behind in the Stone Age". This stereotyping has been an obstacle in our struggle for self-determination. Nobody ever asked us, the so-called Stone-Age people, whether we want the Indonesians or anybody else to come and take us out of this "Stone Age".

We are never asked any questions but we have to cope with all kind of obligations and developments which affect our lives.
Our people are wondering:

Why are the Americans building a spacial base on the island of Biak in West Papua? Is it because the Indonesian Brigadier-General Ali Murtopo told us in 1969 that if we want to be independent we should write to the Americans and ask them if they would be good enough to find us a place on the moon?

Why are the results of Papuan school children less than those of the migrant children? Is it because our genetic composition makes us inferior, as the Indonesians want us to believe?

Why are we Papuans discriminated upon through exaggerated requirements when applying for a job? How can Papuan graduates ever compete for a job with Indonesian immigrants when it is hardly possible in West Papua to get experience with computers or with the English language?

Why are Papuan villagers forced to make investments to improve their houses when Indonesia gets funds from international institutions for the upgrading of the countryside?

POPULATION TRANSFER

A severe and direct threat to the survival of the indigenous peoples of West Papua are the Indonesian programs for population transfer which consist of two components: "relokasi" is the resettlement of indigenous communities and "transmigrasi" is the transfer of immigrants from densely populated islands to the so-called outer-islands.

Resettlement of indigenous people is one of the main objectives of the Indonesian programs for the "traditional people" or "isolated groups". The Indonesian government does not recognize most indigenous claims to land and already thousands of indigenous people have been forced off and removed from their lands. In West Papua, the government aims to resettle 2,150 Papuan families each year into model villages which can be controlled by the Indonesian authorities.

Under the transmigration program, the influx of sponsored and so-called spontaneous migrants has created an Indonesian population of 700,000 people in our country threatening to outnumber the 900,000 Papuans.

According to the Institute on Customary and Traditional Law of Irian Jaya, in the past thirty years 195,675 people have come under the official transmigration program. Just how much priority is given to the transmigration program is shown by the fact that the budget for the next fiscal year is Rps 199 billion (US\$ 93 million), second to public works.

On a recent seminar on transmigration at the University of Cendrawasih in West Papua, the coordinator of the Institute for Cultural and Traditional Law, explained that the transmigrants have never learned about the 'adat' of the Papuans and are therefore not prepared to respect the local conditions and indigenous customs and traditions. They come to our country and behave as if the Papuans are the strangers who have to adjust to their culture, their way of life and their religion. The Papuans on the other hand are not prepared to react on the flow of new developments imposed from outside. Transmigration causes conflicts between Papuans and the immigrants and between the Papuans and the authorities.

Although the World bank has officially pulled out of the transmigration scheme, through its financial aid for "regional development" it still supports Indonesia's population policies. It follows Indonesia's claim that West Papua can only be developed when the population is increased with educated and skilled people from outside West Papua.

The World Food Program and the FAO still do support the transmigration program unashamedly. Both agencies recently announced that they would stop funding transmigration sites in Sumatra (into which they ploughed US\$ 15 million) and that, from 1995, they will divert funds towards transmigration projects in Eastern Indonesia, which includes West Papua.

We are full of expectation that the preliminary study on the human rights dimensions of population transfer by the Special Rapporteurs, Mr Al-Khasawneh and Mr Hatano, will lead to a condemnation of the Indonesian resettlement and transmigration programs.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Under the present five-year plan (1989-1994), East Indonesia, which includes East Timor, the Moluccas and West Papua, has become the new focus of Jakarta's so-called development efforts. Jakarta is attracting foreign investors to the region to set up capital-intensive extractive industries. International funding agencies like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), as major members to the Consultative Group for Indonesia (CGI), are supporting the centralistic government in Jakarta in its neo-colonial policies regarding the so-called outer islands. Although 'development' is the acclaimed aim of the programs, in effect the Indonesian government is reaping the cultural and intellectual property, i.e. the heritage of the indigenous peoples.

Vast areas of west Papua have been granted as concessions to multinational, transnational and Indonesian mining, oil and logging companies, without consultation with, let alone approval of the indigenous peoples who have inherited these lands for the past forty thousand years. The concessions are issued in Jakarta, ignoring and denying the Papuan concepts of land and culture. There are numerous and continuing cases in which indigenous communities are forcibly removed from their ancestral lands through intimidation, bribery and human rights violation, to make way for the exploitation of the natural resources on their lands.

The lands of the Amungme people, for instance, have been mined for gold and copper by a subsidiary of the US based Freeport McMoRan Corporation, since 1967. Thomas Beanal, chief of the Amungme people has written: "It seems that Freeport is demonstrating goodwill to us. However, Freeport has never conducted dialogues with us to determine what we want and need". He stated further that the existence of Freeport and the extraction of resources from his people's homeland create only devastation; the indigenous communities are not provided anything at all, while they can see extreme prosperity in the mining town of Tembagapura.

The outflow of resources from West Papua is far greater than the inflow. For instance the annual revenues of Freeport Indonesia amount to almost one billion US\$. What Freeport alone pays the central government in Jakarta in corporate tax is similar to what West Papua gets from Jakarta. Because of the commercial exploitation of their lands and neglect from the government for their socio-economic situation, the Papuan peoples experience deteriorating living conditions (food, health, education).

The indigenous peoples of West Papua are left with a ruined environment. Rivers are polluted, mountains are changed into holes, forests are stripped of their diversity and their spiritual value.

The erosion of the heritage, the cultural and intellectual property of the indigenous peoples of West Papua must be stopped. It's not only destructive to our self-determination, it also undermines our future development. Indigenous knowledge remains the key to achieving sustainable development, without imposed dependence on imported capital, materials and technologies. We are confident that the report of the honourable Rapporteur on Cultural and Intellectual Property, Madame Daes, will provide tools for protection of our heritage.

Furthermore, we ask the honourable members of the Working Group to support our claim for a moratorium on the exploitation of resources in the ancestral homelands of West Papua and to discuss it with the United Nations Commission on Sustained Development and other international institution, as a result of a consistent policy in the UN-system.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Since the establishment of Indonesian rule in West Papua in May 1963, the people have experienced many human rights violations.

According to the latest Yearbook of Amnesty International, more than one hundred alleged advocates for West Papuan independence are in Indonesian prisons after unfair trials. Nevertheless, the Indonesian military seem reluctant to make prisoners and prefer to kill people on the spot. In the past nine months more than 400 people are reported to have been killed in the border area with Papua New Guinea (PNG). Confirmation is hard to get because the area is closed to observers at both sides of the frontier. A Catholic priest gave evidence of the obliteration of a whole village. Close to the artificial border, Indonesian soldiers of the Battalion 732 attacked the village of Okpoko on October 24, 1993. Thirteen villagers were killed among whom two old women, three children and a baby. The baby was killed by smashing the head against a tree. Another report describes an event in Merauke district. On December 31, Indonesian soldiers killed four Papuan liberation fighters (OPM) and a villager in Kwangtet village. A sixth man got injured and was together with the five dead bodies thrown into a hole and buried alive.

With the excuse of lack of evidence and confirmation, Indonesia seems to be able again and again to avoid condemnation by the international community. It can not be tolerated that Indonesia is thus rewarded for the isolation of areas where it is guilty of severe human rights violations. We urge the honourable members of the Working Group to recommend to the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights to monitor the situation in West Papua, which eventually may result in the stationing of a UN Monitoring Mission to investigate the reported human rights violations against the indigenous peoples of West Papua.

Also the more than 10,000 West Papuan refugees who are residing in camps along the border are not safe from Indonesian operations. There are reports of refugees arrested on PNG territory and taken as prisoner to Indonesian military stations.

About half of the refugees are in camps under auspices of the UNHCR. Here the PNG government and the UNHCR agreed compensation with the local landowners, the indigenous people, for the settlement of refugees on their lands. However, compensation has not been payed and out of frustration the local landowners create conflicts again and again with the refugees. The situation in the refugee camps in PNG where the refugees are indigenous people who are settled in indigenous lands, clearly shows the need for a UNHCR policy regarding indigenous peoples.

Without elaborating on the subject, we like to mention that we will submit to you Madame Chairperson, before the end of this session, a written report on our experiences and views of the continuous threats to the cultural and intellectual property of the indigenous peoples of West Papua.

Madame Chairperson,

We like to conclude our statement with an appeal to the international community to take

specific concrete and institutional measures to provide the indigenous peoples of West Papua with some immediate relief from the widespread and growing threats to our survival as peoples.

Thank you for your attention,

Papua Merdeka !!