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KAMP (NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
ORGANIZATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES) STATEMENT ON
ITEM 5 OF THE 11TH SESSION OF THE UN WORKING GROUP
ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS
GENEVA, JULY 19 - 30, 1993

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Madame Chairperson,

The declaration of the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples has brought little improvement to us, Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines. The situation remain precarious. The House of Representatives and the Senate has yet to pass a law for the recognition of our ancestral domain rights. And the possibility of enacting one looks bleak.

In December last year, President Fidel V. Ramos officially declared 1993 as the Year of the Philippine Indigenous Cultural Communities, a belittling term used by the government to refer to us. It is unfortunate to note, however, that following this declaration meant the further accomodation of the interests of the few powerful elite, who have governed us for decades.

I am referring to the appointment of the Sectoral Representative in Congress for the Indigenous Peoples. Instead of listening and heeding to the opposition of the majority of the Indigenous Peoples against the appointment of this person, Mr. Joseph Sibug, the Commission on Appointments approved his appointment. We were opposed to him, because of his previous record while working with the government.

We believe that the President appointed this person to make it appear that there is no opposition to the Mt. Apo project, a controversial geothermal power plant of the Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) in the Mt. Apo area, Mindanao, despite the opposition of the lumads, the Indigenous Peoples in Mindanao. Mr. Joseph Sibug led some lumads who were lured into accepting the project because of the promises of employment and other monetary benefits. We have been victims of promises of this kind before. We end up losing our lands and impoverished.

The Mt. Apo geothermal power plant is designed to provide power needs of the island of Mindanao which is identified for the establishment of 13 Industrial Centers as part of the government's Medium Term Development Plan which I will explain briefly in the preceding paragraphs.

At present, residents in the area and nearby villages are beginning to suffer diseases, and some recorded deaths because of the toxic wastes emitted from the plant construction.

The Mt. Apo geothermal power plant is only one of the many power plants to be constructed in the lands of the Indigenous Peoples. The Philippine government considers these vital to ease the "power" crisis in the Philippines, we are experiencing 8 - 10 hours daily black-out, and to attract foreign investments. Accordingly, to propel the State to a newly-industrialized-country status by the year 2000 or what the government commonly

refer to as "Philippines 2000".

This vision by the government for a nic-hood status is extremely dangerous for the Philippine Indigenous Peoples. Conversion of agricultural lands into industrial purposes, which is one of the components of this development plan, and appropriating it to multi-national corporations or big business interests will eventually totally dispossess us of our remaining ancestral lands. This will convert more of us into cheap laborers in industrial companies, if at all we land jobs into these, which are alien to us.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is now busy conducting a project among Indigenous Peoples in the identification and delineation of ancestral lands. Yet, we considered this process furthering the division of and conflict among members of the Indigenous Communities. The project employs individual or family approach rather than to conform with the traditional collective decision-making of the Indigenous Peoples. It has been noted in Mindanao that the DENR refuses to recognize ancestral land claims in mixed populations of indigenous and non-indigenous persons. In another instance, they simply abandoned the process claiming there are no more funds.

It is also the aim of the government, as quoted in the daily national newspapers in the recent months, and I quote, "the reintegration of the Indigenous Cultural Communities to the mainstream society as part of the government's vision of Philippines 2000". This is a blatant attack on our right to self determination as distinct peoples. This also means imposing on us the State's system -- land laws, legal system and structures.

Militarization of Indigenous Communities are directed to facilitate the entry of business interests into our ancestral lands. The government, however, claims that its a campaign to wipe off insurgency. Thousands of families are continuously dislocated and impoverished.

To bolster the State's projects and policies, the government gets the support of non-government-organizations directly or indirectly linked to it. And they call this partnership. I call the attention of everybody, particularly our friends in the ngo community to be extremely careful with these organizations. One of these is the Earth Savers who has organized the Global Yes Conference in Manila and has been attending International Conferences of the Indigenous Peoples like the one held in Vienna and Australia recently and claims to represent the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines. They have been misleading people also to believe that there are no more human rights violations in the Philippines and the situation is well. This is a complete distortion of the reality of our situation. They don't have our mandate.

To summarize what I have been saying, all these -- the development aggression and militarization results to the rapid disintegration of our lives, not only physically but also politically, economically, culturally and spiritually. In other words, in its totallity.

In response to this issues we have formulated our own agenda. Simply put, the Philippine Indigenous Peoples Agenda is to MANAGE, CONTROL, DEVELOP AND REAP THE FRUITS OF OUR ANCESTRAL DOMAIN. Whether it be recognized by the government or not, we will pursue it as our agenda.

The accomplishment of the Indigenous Peoples Agenda is a proof that we know where we stand and to carry on our own affairs for the development of our peoples. It has developed from the discussions in the grassroots level up to the national level. It will continue to develop with the same process. This is the process we envision, Madame Chair, in matters concerning and affecting us.

Finally, I would like to express my thaks to all the members of the Working Group in their efforts in the drafting of the Decleration of the World's Indigenous Peoples Rights. May your endeavor in this draft decleration aimed for the survival of the Indigenous Peoples be rewarded in the future discussions of this same document of a Decleration commensurate to the aspirations of the Indigenous Peoples delegates attending this session.

Thank you Madame Chair!