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Thank you Madame Chairperson for giving me the floor.

The Philippines is delighted to see you once again steering the session of this Working Group. Your well-known dedication and experience in the promotion of human rights, particularly, the rights of the indigenous populations assure us of a successful session. My delegation extends to you and the distinguished members of the Working Group <sup>our</sup> ~~of its~~ full <sup>est</sup> cooperation.

My delegation has read with keen interest the information <sup>contained in the</sup> documents relating to item 4 of the Working Group's agenda. The inputs given by the various UN organs, governments and non-governmental organizations including the statements we have heard during the debate in this item are valuable inputs to the standard setting activities which is the main task of this Working Group. We look forward to <sup>the</sup> ~~our~~ consideration of item 5 of our agenda and in this connection we note with appreciation the working paper which you, Madame Chairperson, has prepared containing a set of draft preambular paragraph and principles for inclusion in a universal declaration on indigenous rights.

There are two major developments in the work of the UN system pertaining in particular to the evolution of standards concerning the rights of indigenous populations. As this is subject of agenda item 5, my delegation only wishes to note them at this intervention. I refer, Madam Chairman to the following:

First, The decision of the Commission on Human Rights at its 44th session in March 1988 and confirmed by the

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ECOSOC at its first regular session in May 1988, mandating the preparation of an outline on the possible purposes, scope and sources of study to be conducted by Mr. Alfonso Martinez, Special Rapporteur,<sup>and</sup> a distinguished member of this Working Group - on the potential utility of treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements between indigenous populations and Governments for the purpose~~s~~ of ensuring the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous populations.

Second. The work initiated at the 75th International Labor Conference held in Geneva in June 1988 for the partial ~~session~~<sup>session</sup> of the ILO's Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention of 1957.

These two developments reflect the continuing concerted and complementary efforts of the international community to evolve universal standards for the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous population.

These developments are reflected in parallel by efforts of national governments like the Philippines. In order to contribute to this process particularly in the context of the work of this Working Group, I shall briefly indicate the work being done in the Philippines *in this regard.*

Firstly, and in view of the proximity of the event, I wish to inform the Working Group and distinguished delegates about an International Conference and Festival of Indigenous cultures which the Philippines<sup>Government</sup> is hosting in Manila on October 24-30 1988. This event which is the first of its kind is being carried out in connection <sup>with</sup> under the

(1988-1997)

International Decade for Culture, proclaimed by the General Assembly. The Conference and Festival of cultures is aimed at getting to know each other, share experiences and problems as well as exchange views on preferred solutions. I take this opportunity to extend an invitation to all of you to attend this Conference and Festival and as my compatriot from the Cordillera Peoples Alliances stated yesterday, to meet our indigenous cultural communities and I may add, other indigenous cultural communities from all over the world.

Now, following your injunction for orderliness and clarity, Madam Chairman, I wish to touch on the developments in the Philippines in terms of the "problems" and "solutions".

Madam Chairperson, distinguished delegates, There are in the Philippines about 72 indigenous cultural communities, which ~~refer to ethno-linguistic groups~~ <sup>which</sup> have been least influenced by the Spanish and American colonization. The most conservative estimate places this population of tribal Filipinos at around 5.5 million or roughly 10% of the national population. They include among others the Cordillera Peoples, the Negritos and the Bataks and in connection with the latter two, I just want to set the record straight that the estimated number of Negritos and Bataks are 92,000 and 8774 respectively and not 15,000 Aetas or Negritos and 200 <sup>Bataks</sup> as claimed by the representative of the Society for Threatened Peoples who spoke yesterday.

Our indigenous communities have succeeded in preserving and maintaining their pre-Hispanic culture, customs and

traditions. They also share common historic problems namely: the loss of their ancestral lands, political subjugation and the lack of economic development. These problems have been spawned thru the centuries ~~and lived up to the very recent past~~ *still obtain today, at my*

What is important to realize is that the Filipino people and the present government of President Corazon C. Aquino have, to borrow the poetic and poignant language of a distinguished delegate yesterday, taken the "white feather" by looking at the past <sup>and the present</sup> and has now taken the "eagle feather" and the "spring water" by hearing and talking with our indigenous cultural communities. *rate by 6' 1/2 way recent part*

The Filipino people in 1987 adopted a new Constitution which provides in its declaration of principles that "The state recognizes and promotes the rights of indigenous cultural communities within the framework of national unity and development". Further, the Philippine Constitution ~~ordains~~ *provides for*

1. The creation of autonomous regions in Muslim Mindanao and in the Cordillera consisting of provinces, cities, municipalities and geographical areas sharing common and distinctive historical and cultural heritage, economic and social structures, and other relevant characteristics within the framework of the Philippine Constitution and the national sovereignty as well as territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines; and

2. The State, subject to the provisions of the Constitution and national development policies and programs,

shall protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to their ancestral lands to ensure their economic, social and cultural well-being.

It further provides that "the Philippine Congress may provide for the applicability of customary laws governing property rights or relations in determining the ownership and extent of ancestral domain."

Barely a year and a half after the adoption of the Philippine Constitution and just a year after the convening of the Philippine bicameral Congress, I am pleased to inform the Working Group and the distinguished delegates of the following steps taken to implement the constitutional provisions:

1. Pursuant to the specific constitutional provision, President Corazon Aquino has constituted two (RCC) respectively for Muslim Mindanao and the Cordilleras. They are composed of multisectoral representatives and are tasked with assisting the Congress in enacting an organic act for each autonomous region. This organic act shall define the basic structure of government for the region and the creation of the autonomous region shall be effective when approved by the majority of the votes cast by the constituents in a plebiscite call for the purpose. The enactment of these two organic acts for the two autonomous regions in Muslim Mindanao and the Cordilleras are mandated by the Constitution to be accomplished within 18 months from the time of the convening of the First Congress in July 1987. Already pending before the Philippine Congress are proposed organic acts to create the autonomous regions of Muslim Mindanao and

*Regional  
Consultative  
Committee*

the Cordilleras.

2. In the meanwhile, three newly created agencies namely the Office of Northern Cultural Communities, the Office of Southern Cultural Communities and the Office of Muslim Affairs have initiated educational, health and livelihood projects in various areas throughout the country. In this connection, the information on self-reliant projects cited yesterday by the Cordillera Peoples Alliance are indeed consistent with national thrust of development efforts at grassroots level.

~~of its efforts~~ <sup>in the role of</sup> at national development and social justice <sup>to improve</sup> ~~with the adoption of~~ <sup>adopt</sup> in June 1988 ~~the~~ Comprehensive Land Reform Programme (CARP).

It aims to benefit 10 million people employed in agriculture especially the 5.5 million tenants, agricultural lease holders and regular and seasonal farm workers. In order to prevent encroachment on ancestral lands of indigenous cultural minorities, a bill has been filed in the Philippine Congress to allow exemptions from CARP of ancestral lands.

Madame Chairman, there are at least 10 other proposed legislations initiated at the Philippine Congress designed ~~at empowerment~~ <sup>to</sup> and upliftment <sup>of condition</sup> of the Filipino indigenous cultural communities. These range from <sup>the</sup> creation of the autonomous regions as well as other institutions such as ~~A~~ Cultural Minority Advisory Counsel, a Commission on Ancestral Domain, a Department of National Integration and

the granting of equal employment opportunities to members of cultural communities.

The Philippine Government and the 58 million Filipinos including the 10 million indigenous cultural communities are ~~indeed~~ taking the "eagle feather" and sharing the "spring water" in the incessant stream of our newly-restored democracy. It is in this spirit that I call upon the Society of Threatened People <sup>and</sup> my compatriots who spoke eloquently yesterday, ~~of among others~~, of alleged violations of indigenous peoples rights, to submit documented complaints to the Philippine Commission on Human Rights in order that they may be duly investigated, complaints filed and due process of law, <sup>(to allow)</sup> to take its natural course. I cannot <sup>by</sup> conclude <sup>my statements</sup> ~~by requesting the representative of the Society of Threatened People to refrain from irresponsible statements~~ <sup>in his statements which tend to deny the existence of the Society of Threatened People</sup> to the effect that "compensation for the US military bases on this ancestral Aeta land, amounting to at least \$150 million were given to President Aquino while the Aeta received some T-shirts during the Presidential visit". I shall be very glad to hand him a copy of the 1947 Philippine-US Military Agreement defining the treaty obligations between the 2 countries. Even a perusal of any international newspaper will inform him that this agreement is currently under review by respective Governments. His concern about the relocation of Aeta families is well taken and this in fact has been subject of specific action by the Philippine Commission on Human Rights urging the provincial governor of the

of the province of Pampanga to ensure the protection of

the rights of the relocated families. My delegation awaits  
a copy of the report of NCO fact-finding team which the  
representative of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance will

~~I thank you for your kind attention.~~

circulate & my delegation reserves its right to  
also circulate with ~~Subcomandante~~ person.