

29 May 2009 - NOT Read
Item 7

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STATEMENT ON THE FUTURE WORK OF THE UNPFII – Asia Caucus

Thank you, Madame Chairperson, for this opportunity to speak on this Agenda item 7.

We have two additional points to bring to your attention.

1. We recommend that the UNPFII, beginning at its ninth session, organise a “learning centre”, modelled on the experience of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. This is to maximise the knowledge and expertise, present during the forum, as well as the presence of many participants to the UNPFII sessions, for educational sessions which are not be limited to 3 minute statements or short presentations during side events. Parallel to the UNPFII meetings, a Learning Centre will provide the opportunity to organise educational sessions of 3-hour duration conducted by IP organisations, UN agencies, governments and other interested bodies.

For example, next year is the International Year for Biodiversity. A Learning Centre could focus on educational sessions highlighting Traditional Knowledge, Ecosystem Approaches and Indigenous Peoples role in customary resource management and sustainable use of biodiversity. The only need is for the UNPFII to allocate a dedicated room for the Learning Centre, and to help organise the sessions, in collaboration with interested organisations.

2. Second, we wish to raise the matter of a standard of conduct for experts of the UNPFII, who must at all times uphold the rights of indigenous peoples. This morning, under Agenda Item 4, the Cordillera People’s Alliance made a statement on human rights, with significant bearing on the reputation and future work of the UNPFII. The statement, lays before the UNPFII a serious case of dispossession of lands of the Carino clan of the indigenous Ibaloi people of Baguio City, Philippines, with the complicity and final responsibility of the Chairman of the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), of the Philippines, the UNPFII expert chosen by the Asian governments to the UNPFII.

3. Given that the NCIP is the body charged with the protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples in the Philippines, and given the serious procedural and substantive failings in the application of the Philippine Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) in this case; a member of the UNPFII will become the subject of campaigns, and court cases filed domestically and in international human rights tribunals to seek justice and redress for this serious violation of land rights.

4. I bring this matter to the attention of the UNPFII, to raise the matter of a standard of conduct for experts of the UNPFII, who must at all times uphold the rights of indigenous peoples. We call on the UNPFII for action on these matters.

Thank you very much for your attention.