

Statement on
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO LAND
Item Nº. 5

By:
JIMID P. MANSAYAGAN
for
Lumad Mindanaw Peoples Federation
PO Box 80905, 8000 Davao City
Philippines
Tel. +6382 241 1761
Fax. +6382 241 1788
Email: lumad@gateway.com

Delivered at the 17th Session of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous
Populations
Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Palais des Nations, Genève
28 July 1999

Check Against Delivery

WGIP 92/SEA.PHL/4

Thank you, Madame Chairperson:

for giving me an opportunity to take the floor for this very important, very serious matter that concerns the survival of the world's indigenous peoples. In this connection, I would like to draw the kind attention of the distinguished members of the Working Group and fellow delegates to the worldview of the Lumad Peoples concerning our relationship to our land, territories and resources.

The exercise of the right of self-determination of Lumad Peoples is never more clear and more urgent than when one compares the divergence in perspectives over land and development between governments and indigenous peoples.

Our relationship to land takes into consideration the entirety of creation weaving the spirituality with the physical aspects of the land into daily survival. Land is not part of us but we are part of the land. The land do not belong to us but we belong to the land. It is our life where our future springs. It is a resource base for the survival of our peoples and all the creation therein. Low impact methods of resource use sustain the cycle of life, allowing replenishment and continued use for our endless generations.

of the Philippines
The government, on the other hand, see land as a resource base for national wealth accumulation with little or no regard for the limited carrying capacity or the exhaustability of its resources. Government measure development by the capacity of the land to generate income, while for the Lumad Peoples development is measured by the capacity of the land to continually regenerate.

Our way of life as indigenous peoples has been considered by the outside world as primitive, backward, unscientific and the like which justifies the government's action to civilize, develop, assimilate, integrate us into national body politics. Their thinking for advancement justifies them to take our land from us for development and advancement. But what I wish to say here, Madame Chairperson is that our way of life is itself an advancement and development. Only it is consistent to our beliefs and traditions. We have no word for « sustainable development » but our ancestors live in it. We have no word that captures « equitable distribution of wealth » but no poor or rich in our villages.

In conclusion, Madame Chairperson no amount of external support that can alleviate us from poverty. No amount of money that can redeem us from our present situation. What we need is the **recognition and respect of our collective rights** to our land. So that we can continue to re-institute our social structure. To help facilitate this aspirations, my delegation appeal to members of the United Nations to adopt a United Nations draft declaration on the rights of the indigenous peoples which guarantees and promotes our collective rights to our land and self-determination.

Thank you, Madame Daes *for bearing with me.*