

**First Session on the Permanent Forum on indigenous issues
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Agenda Item no.6: On Economic and Social Development

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Chairperson, Cordillera Peoples Alliance**

Thank you Mr. Chairperson. In Behalf of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance, I wish to congratulate you for being elected as the Chairperson, as we welcome the First Session of the Permanent Forum on indigenous issues.

At present, the thrust of economic globalization has worsened the further exploitation, expropriation and destruction of indigenous peoples land and resources, causing greater economic dislocation and marginalization of indigenous communities.

In the Cordillera- Philippines, the ancestral homeland of the Igorots, the development program of the government is the more systematic resource extraction such as large scale mining and large dam construction by multinational companies and funded by export credit agencies. This is combined with the massive expansion of commercial agriculture which is dependent on agricultural input of commercial pesticides and fertilizers. This is being funded by official Development Aid (ODA) from the European Union and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Likewise, the privatization of lands for tourism and corporate interest is being promoted by state agencies.

All these economic and development programs being imposed on us do not lead to our economic upliftment, nor development as distinct peoples. Instead, it is causing the destruction of our land and subsistence economy, which has nurtured us for centuries, as it provides the material base of our continuing existence and survival as distinct peoples. In spite of the aggressive drive for "modernization" and integration to the dominant capitalist system, we are able to sustain our traditional system of resource management, use and conservation for the collective needs of our people. Yet these are not fully recognized and acknowledged by the market driven and resource extractive development Programs.

In particular, the impact of large scale infrastructure and extractive projects in territories of indigenous peoples, diminished the role of indigenous women on resource management and economic production. At present, more and more indigenous women have to leave their villages to find sources of livelihood, and some of them have ended in the sex slave industry. Likewise, indigenous youth, who have been a productive force in subsistence economy, are now increasingly engaging in anti-social activities, as their energies and potentials have not been put to more productive endeavors.

The onslaught of development projects in territories of indigenous peoples which are causing more misery, conflicts and oppression of our people, are directly violating our rights to our land and resources and to our self determination. It is precisely because of these grave violations of our rights that the historical injustices committed against

indigenous peoples continue to prevail and dominate our daily lives. Thus, any development framework and program, even those aimed for poverty reduction, but does not recognize our inherent rights, is bound to fail, and will only lead to greater conflicts, and exploitation. It is then the time to turn around the direction of main stream development, towards the actual recognition of our fundamental rights over our land and resources, and to self determination, in order to achieve social justice and equity for indigenous peoples. Any genuine partnership for development of indigenous peoples with states, UN agencies, aid agencies and others shall be in the context and framework of the recognition and respect of our rights. This is the core issue to move us forward for meaningful partnership.

Having emphasized this point, allow me to put forward some recommendations to the Permanent Forum for its recommendations to the ECOSOC, other UN agencies and concerned agencies:

1. To adopt the Draft Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples as the framework for any development plans and programs affecting indigenous peoples. This includes the review and evaluation of existing policies and guidelines relating with indigenous peoples to make it consistent with the principles and provisions of the draft declaration on rights of indigenous peoples. This is a matter of urgent concern.
2. To call for a moratorium on large scale and destructive projects affecting indigenous peoples without their expressed consent.
3. To implement the principles of Free, Informed, Prior Consent (FPIC) to all development projects affecting indigenous peoples. This includes full information disclosure, thorough consultation and an independent process of getting the collective views of affected communities. It should also include the respect for the right of community to say no to any project that affects them as a matter of self-determination.
4. To study and adopt the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams(WCD) on water and energy projects. The recommendations of the WCD promotes the rights approach to development and lays down the principles of equity, social justice and sustainable development.
5. To develop a mechanism for the monitoring and evaluation on the impacts of development projects by multinational companies, bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, export credit agencies and other related institutions, and demand their accountability with regards to violations of indigenous peoples rights.
6. To call for the rehabilitation of devastated indigenous communities and land, and for the restoration of the indigenous peoples livelihood sources such as water bodies and forests.