

22 May 2009

Jacqueline K. Carino

Item 4

PF09jacqueline205

Eighth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

May 18-29, 2009

New York

Item 6: Dialogue with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Statement of the Asia Indigenous Caucus

By Jacqueline K. Carino

Indigenous peoples' organizations in Asia call the urgent attention of the Food and Agriculture Organization to government policies and programs that not only threaten indigenous peoples' food security but have caused indigenous peoples' food insecurity in the first place.

We refer to policies that encourage more industrialization of agriculture, more use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and GMOs, more Green Revolution, monoculture and corporate agriculture, more liberalization of trade and investment.

Such programs have miserably failed to uplift indigenous peoples and stave off their hunger. They have degraded the environment and forests, decreased agro-biodiversity, undermined small scale farming, diverted land use to cash crops and agrofuels, destroyed the self-sufficiency of small indigenous farmers, led to landgrabbing by States and corporations, forced eviction of indigenous peoples from their land, and denied them their traditional livelihoods. These have also contributed to climate change aggravating the food crisis.

Asian governments are granting large tracts of land for the development of plantations, for rubber, agro-fuels, pulp, etc. They claim that this helps boost agricultural productivity and creates jobs. FAO is not heard challenging this model, though it leads to land alienation among indigenous communities, violence against indigenous people, and loss of food security.

In Cambodia, FAO has funded the development of a National Forestry Program that promotes state-led top-down forest planning in a country of forest and land dependent communities. The process is disempowering to communities. The resultant plan will likely validate government mismanagement of lands and forests, promote conversion of forests to agro-industrial plantations without securing indigenous peoples rights to forest resources. In the Philippines, modernization of agriculture, extractive industries like mining and logging, and militarization, which are all priority programs of the Philippine government, are the major threats to indigenous peoples' food security. Likewise, in Laos, there are plans to build several mega-dams that threaten the traditional agriculture, food and culture of many indigenous peoples.

We also question the seeming reluctance of the FAO and States to listen to the voices of indigenous peoples' organizations on the ground as seen in the dwindling support for the participation of grassroots movements in important international forums on food. For

instance, social movements, including indigenous peoples, through the International Planning Committee (IPC) in Asia, were denied greater representation at the FAO Asia Regional Conference in Bangkok last March, due to supposed "lack of funds".

We thus urge the FAO and States to:

1. Ensure the respect of the UNDRIP in all its programmes and activities relating to indigenous peoples. In particular, to implement the provisions for the Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of indigenous peoples. Stop implementing programs and policies that violate the rights of indigenous peoples to food sovereignty.
2. We challenge the appropriateness of granting industrial concessions for plantation development, hydroelectric dams, mining and tourism. Instead, we urge you to support small-scale, sustainable and traditional agriculture and to give due credit and support for indigenous knowledge and practices of indigenous peoples, which provide valuable alternatives that could mitigate the present food crisis.
3. Ensure that the Cambodian National Forestry Program funded by FAO uses approaches suited to the situation where the forests of the country are the resources of people's daily lives and where the model of state-led forest management has been a disaster. The current approach of technical planning with minimal and sometimes abusive "consultation" with community people needs to be halted and a civil society consultative process put in place.
4. Ensure indigenous peoples participation in key national, regional and international forums that could impact on their food security. Develop an indigenous peoples policy within the FAO that is consistent with the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This should include the establishment of an indigenous advisory body composed of indigenous leaders widely endorsed by indigenous organizations.
5. Establish partnerships with indigenous organizations in the development of programs and projects addressing indigenous peoples issues related to food security and sustainable agricultural practices.