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Intervention on Item 6: Discussion on the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples

By: Ms. Argee Macliing Malayao, KAMP National Alliance of Indigenous Peoples Organizations in the Philippines, Cordillera Peoples Alliance, Asia Pacific Indigenous Youth Network and the Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-determination and Liberation

Thank you Mr. Chair and greetings to our indigenous brothers and sisters.

Despite the enactment of the Philippine Indigenous Peoples Rights Act in 1997 and the Philippine Government being a signatory of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, the non-recognition of their rights to ancestral lands remains to be the core of the indigenous peoples' problems in the Philippines. The violation of the collective rights of the indigenous peoples ranges from the deprivation of basic social services, denial of access to judicial processes, forced evacuation and displacement, extra-judicial killings which includes women and children, enforced disappearances and others.

Laws and policies promulgated by the Philippine government, such as the Mining Act of 1999 and the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS), those that pertain to the use and ownership of lands, deprive indigenous peoples from the right to manage, own, control and utilize their territories and the resources found therein. The extraction of resources from ancestral territories is motivated by the demands of international markets, and facilitated by liberalized economic policies. An estimated 595, 058.11 hectares of ancestral lands are already covered by approved mining applications.

The counter-insurgency or peace and development programs of the Philippine State, the Operational Plan Bantay Laya and Bayanihan, have caused numerous human rights violations committed against the indigenous peoples and the atmosphere of impunity. From June 2010 up to the present, 35 indigenous peoples have been extra-judicially killed. The implementation of development projects accompanied by militarization of indigenous communities has been a major cause of the violation of indigenous peoples' collective rights.

We recognize that the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples will provide a venue for the engagement of indigenous peoples to push forward reforms in the national level to benefit the indigenous peoples communities, and help realize the sincere implementation of the UNDRIP so that these are meaningful to the indigenous peoples in the Philippines and the rest of the world.

The genuine participation of the indigenous peoples in international processes and mechanisms aimed at promoting and holding our rights as peoples is of equal importance to the continuing struggles of the indigenous peoples on the ground and to the national engagement.

In some local, national and international processes, we have experiences where the representation for the indigenous peoples' communities are manipulated mainly by the government and its implementing agencies. Pseudo tribal council were set up in favour of the interest of some corporations and their so-called development projects.

We are also concerned with the issues on the modalities of the WCIP which has caused conflicting views and somewhat divides the position of the indigenous peoples and indigenous youth, especially on the other regions, towards their full participation in the WCIP.

We look forward to the concrete and appropriate plans and actions to be formulated in the WCIP and for the inclusion of the recommendations of the indigenous youth to these plans.

It is in this context that we put forward the following recommendations:

1. The States must respect and recognize the concerns of the Indigenous Peoples to be forwarded at the WCIP and to immediately act upon these as another step towards the realization of the UNDRIP.
2. That an important output of the WCIP should be an action-oriented outcome document on the effective and genuine implementation of the UNDRIP which takes into account the views and concerns raised during the preparatory meetings
3. For the WCIP, the States, UN Agencies and other concerned institutions to provide support and funding to ensure the wide and effective participation of more indigenous peoples, including indigenous youth and women, from the grassroots
4. The selection process for the participation of the indigenous peoples must be given to indigenous peoples organizations working at the grassroots to ensure the genuine participation of indigenous peoples and ensure the representation of the indigenous youth and women.
5. For the genuine implementation of the UNDRIP, the Philippine Government must review policies and laws concerning indigenous peoples and our communities, take into account the decades of experience of the indigenous peoples nationwide and repeal those laws and policies which allow or support the violation of the rights of indigenous peoples such as the Mining Act of 1995, Executive Order #79, Operational Plan Bayanihan, among others.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.