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STATEMENT OF THE CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE ON THE 9th SESSION OF  
THE WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS ON JULY 22 TO AUGUST 2, 1991

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Madame chairperson Mrs. Irene Daes, members of the Working group,  
representatives and fellow delegates of indigenous peoples.

In behalf of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance, a federation of  
indigenous peoples organizations in the Cordillera region, Northern  
Philippines and member of KAMP (the national federation of indigenous  
peoples organizations in the Philippines). I am here to present  
our statement on our experience as indigenous peoples in a neo-colonial  
society like the Philippines over the past year.

Thru this sharing, we hope to further enrich the collective efforts  
and further encourage the vigilance of all indigenous peoples in the  
participation to setting standards for indigenous peoples rights for all to  
respect and observe.

The most urgent and pressing issue confronting the Cordillera peoples now  
and most indigenous peoples in the Philippines is ethnocide and development  
aggression—Aerial bombings, strafing and massive militarization  
of indigenous peoples territories by state forces.

The Cordillera along with the island of Negros and Mindanao has been  
picked-out as the main targets of the Aquino governments' TOTAL WAR  
POLICY and strategy which aims to defeat <sup>the</sup> insurgency problem before the  
end of the year 1992.

This brutal war policy is seen not only as a simple attempt to quell  
the insurgency but more significantly as a move to facilitate the  
exploitation of the resource base of the Cordillera and indigenous  
peoples ancestral domain ~~as a~~ of the Lumad-Mindanao.

In my region the Cordillera, the massive exploitation of the  
Cordillera forest, mineral, hydrological and human resources have  
caused environmental degradation, forced displacements and the  
economic marginalization of the people.

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Years of corruption and mismanagement of state affairs have pushed the Aquino government to allow massive and extractive development projects in order to pay its foreign debt which amounts to 29.6 billion dollars.

We see the governments' Total War Policy as a last ditch attempt to insure that its development scheme would push through at all costs. The ground and air operations of combined elements of the Philippine National Police, Armed Forces of the Philippines, government supported civilian armed units and vigilantes as the CAFGU and the CPLA in the 3 of the 5 provinces in the Cordillera and 14 out of the 16 provinces in Mindanao affecting around 22 ethno-linguistic groups of indigenous peoples in the Philippines has resulted in the following;

1. The violation of indigenous peoples collective rights to their ancestral domain and the right to make use of their resources, their traditional source of livelihood for their development and the development of the <sup>wider</sup> ~~bigger~~ Filipino peoples as well, by big mining, logging and other big development operations with the help of the armed forces.
2. Environmental destruction as exemplified by massive open-pit mining operations, the burning of hundred of hectares of reforestation projects of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources by the military in their attempt to deprive the enemy of hiding places. The poisoning of water sources by dropping bombs in rivers and streams in the areas. The massive denudation of Mt. Apo, a UN recognized National Parks and equivalent reserves, the highest mountain of the land and the sacred mountain of indigenous peoples groups; in favor of building a massive geothermal plant that will not directly benefit the majority of peoples in the area.
3. Sexual abuse of women and <sup>violation of</sup> ~~women's~~ <sup>children's</sup> rights by military elements in indigenous peoples villages <sup>during</sup> ~~during~~ military operations, and the use of children as human shields during shooting encounters with the enemy. This has been documented in Kalinga and Abra early this year.
4. The disruption of education as the schools are used as detachments, the teachers and school children are terrorized and traumatized by the bombings, mortar shellings and indiscriminate firing. ~~and~~ One such incident of a victim of indiscriminate firing and fatal wounding of a young boy gathering firewood was in Sagada, Mountain

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Province in June 12 of this year. (The treatment and compensation to the family and the boy has not yet been given inspite of appeals from the village and town councils.)

5. Destruction and theft of the people's material and cultural heirlooms important to the people's cultural identity as distinct peoples.

6. Disruption of economic activities of whole villages in militarized areas which is causing serious food shortages. The destruction of agricultural farms and orchards due to bombings and fires. And the prevention of the people to harvest and work in their fields.

Documented and significant is the forced takeover of the communal gold mine areas of the indigenous peoples of Balabalan, Kalinga. The imposition of food, medicine and economic blockades by military checkpoints.

7. The restriction of the mobility of the people in the communities and deprivation of basic services to the communities such as health services because of the military operations.

8. Forced decimation of indigenous peoples communities whose survival is necessary for cultural continuity.

We appeal to all here to support our campaign to stop the Total War policy that is causing the death and destruction of indigenous peoples, ~~indigenous peoples~~. We also reiterate our appeal in 1989 for urgent action and recall the provision by the independent commission on International Humanitarian issues stating;

"Recourse procedures must be established within the UN to examine threats to the well-being and survival of the indigenous peoples. An international ombudsman under the UN's aegis could help monitor such situations and report to the General Assembly and Secretary General all crisis situations affecting indigenous peoples such as conflicts, forced relocations, ethnocide and genocide."

We also hope that the Working group for indigenous populations would continue to be a forum in the UN for indigenous peoples issues in relation to the implementation of the standards that will hopefully be set.

We also state our support for the proposal to hold the next meeting of the Working group for indigenous populations in Manila next year so this forum may be brought nearer to Asia where majority of indigenous peoples groups found in the Asia-Pacific area will find more accessible and may this opportunity give them a chance to participate in these deliberations as a people.

Thank You and mabuhay!