

**12th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
Joint Statement of Indigenos Peoples International Centre for Policy Research and Development-  
Tebtebba Foundation and Philippine Task Force for Indigenous Peoples Rights (TFIP)**

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**Agenda Item #5: Intersessional activities and follow up to thematic studies and advice**

Madame Chair, this intervention relates to two earlier studies of the EMRIP: The implementation of the Right to Education of Indigenous Peoples in 2009 and on Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in 2018. We feel that these studies are very much relevant today and that the recommendations forwarded by the EMRIP need to be revisited and reiterated in light of recent violations of the right to FPIC and education in the Philippines.

Just a few days ago, the Department of Education in the Philippines ordered the suspension of operations of 55 schools in remote indigenous communities in Mindanao. The reason given for the order was that the schools were allegedly training indigenous children to rebel and fight against government. Even before the suspension order, the Save our Schools network in the Philippines reported that military and paramilitary groups had forcibly shutdown the schools and forced the community at gunpoint to destroy some of the school buildings. In the past years, the students, teachers and parents of most of these schools have been victims of killings, grave threats and other forms of intimidation which were reportedly committed by military and paramilitary groups. Most of the cases were reported to different agencies of the UN including this mechanism.

There is a clear violation of human rights that deprives indigenous children of the right to education in communities that have long been denied of educational services from the government. These schools were established by the indigenous communities themselves with support from non-government non-profit organizations. They underline the findings of the EMRIP Study that indigenous peoples have historically been excluded and disadvantaged in terms of education. It is imperative that indigenous peoples be allowed to learn and transmit their cultures and traditions, values, perspectives, innovations and practices to the younger generation using their own schools and traditional ways of learning.

At the same time, indigenous peoples in the Cordillera and Sierra Madre mountains in the Philippines are facing displacement due to the construction of hydropower, irrigation and water source projects, specifically the Chico River Pump Irrigation project and the New Centennial Water Source project, both funded through loans from China, as part of the government's Build Build Build program. These projects are being implemented without genuine free prior informed consent of the affected indigenous communities, in violation of the spirit of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Madame Chair, we fully support the EMRIP's Advice that the right to education and FPIC are indispensable in realizing indigenous peoples' right to self-determination.

We recommend that the EMRIP bring these violations of the right to education and FPIC of the indigenous peoples to the attention of the Philippine Government and to remind them of their obligations to uphold and protect indigenous peoples rights.

We further recommend for the EMRIP to advice States to integrate and mainstream human rights and indigenous peoples rights education in their formal educational system curricula towards meaningful implementation of the UNDRIP.

Thank you Madame Chair and the EMRIP experts for your consideration.