

**PAPER PRESENTATION OF THE CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE(CPA)
TO THE 17th SESSION OF THE UN-WGIP
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Madam Daes, members of the Working Group, indigenous brothers and sisters, I bring you warm greetings from the Cordillera Peoples Alliance(CPA).

The theme of this year's WGIP session on " indigenous peoples and their relationship to land" is indeed very appropriate as we are witness to the further dispossession of indigenous peoples all over the world in face of globalization.

In the Philippines, the entire homeland of the Cordillera indigenous peoples is already expropriated by the government in partnership with multinational companies and local capitalists for so called development projects. These has been designated for mining, dams and geothermal plants, eco-tourism and biodiversity conservation sites, real estate development, agri-business infrastructures, and special economic zones under the Philippines 2000 Development Agenda. Looking into the map of the Cordillera region vis a vis all these development targets, virtually nothing is left to the 1 million indigenous peoples for their means of survival as distinct peoples. It is tantamount to a declaration of war to the indigenous peoples as the active defense of ancestral lands is a matter of survival and dignity as distinct peoples.

The much touted Indigenous Peoples Right Act(IPRA) which is supposedly to recognize ancestral land rights, has not served this purpose. It violates ancestral land boundaries as defined by the indigenous groups, thereby resulting to boundary conflicts with some leading to tribal wars. Further, IPRA opens up ancestral lands to the privatization and commercialization by those who have access to political power or has the money. The Certificates of Ancestral or Domain Titles are not legal documents of ownership but mere stewardship.

Likewise, it cannot deter the expropriation of ancestral lands for mining, energy projects and the like. Stipulations for the social acceptability or "prior and informed consent" of any project by affected communities are just mechanisms of government beaurucratic requirements from local government units. It is not based on genuine and transparent consultations and respect to the position of affected communities.

At present, the Supreme Court is yet to decide on the constitutionality of IPRA.

Considering the claim of the government for recognition of ancestral lands rights, how come it is hellbent in completing the San Roque Multi-purpose dam, inspite of the sustained opposition by the affected Ibaloi communities? More than 20,000 ibalois will be directly affected with this project from siltation, inundation of their ricefields, sacred grounds, farms and gardens.

After the full liberalization of the mining industry under the Philippine Mining Act of 1995, already 70% of the total land area of the Cordillera region of 1.2 million hectares is covered with mining applications. Inspite of petitions and protest actions by the indigenous peoples and other concerned sectors against large scale mining, exploration activities are still ongoing under the protection of the military. The Cordillera region remains militarized until today and this is mainly to secure the investments of mining firms and other projects of the government. It is also intended to quell the peoples opposition.

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In the face of these intrusions into the indigenous peoples source of life, code of conduct by multinational companies are being offered and being claimed as a means of damage-control. Madam Daes, we would like to register that any Code of Conduct by multinational companies are rendered useless and unacceptable to us without the full recognition and respect of our ancestral land rights. Any negotiations with multinational companies can only be binding and just if the indigenous peoples are in full control of their resources.

We would also like to state that the right to say NO to the entry of multinational companies and destructive projects into the territories of indigenous peoples should be honored and respected. This is not to say that we are against development or that we are selfish. We believe that we have the ultimate right to define our own course of development, consistent with our socio-cultural growth as a people.

In this respect, we urge the Working group to call upon our government to genuinely recognize and uphold the Cordillera indigenous peoples right to our ancestral land and to self determination. The Cordillera indigenous peoples movement will continue to launch militant actions and broaden its support in defense of land and life. We will pursue our struggle in all venues towards the attainments of our inherent rights to ancestral land and self determination.

Thank you and good day.