

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Third session

New York, 10-21 May 2004

Agenda item 4 of the provisional agenda

Mandated areas

Submitted by Tebtebba Organization, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

**BAGUIO DECLARATION
OF THE
2ND ASIAN INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S CONFERENCE**

We, the participants of the 2nd Asian Indigenous Women's Conference affirm our vital role in advancing the struggles of indigenous and tribal peoples of Asia for social and ecological justice, self-determination and peace. We celebrate our diversity and our solidarity as vibrant movements working to renew our historic identities at this critical time.

At the turn of the 21st century, the unfettered forces of neo-liberal globalisation, statist militarism and development aggression are violating our inherent rights and fundamental freedoms and threatening our very survival as distinct peoples. As indigenous peoples and as women, we suffer multiple burdens, underpinned by racial, cultural, religious and gender discrimination.

Today, as we celebrate International Women's Day, on the closing year of the UN Decade for Indigenous Peoples, we take stock of our situation as women, and as indigenous peoples, and commit ourselves to the fullest exercise of our rights towards self-determination, non-discrimination and equality for all peoples of the world.

At this conference, we bear testimony to the following problems and issues:

Globalisation and the Exploitation and Theft of Indigenous Peoples' Lands, Waters, Forests and Resources

- Globalisation is accelerating the alienation, privatisation, commercialization and theft of community forests, lands, waters and traditional medicinal plants causing impoverishment and generating ill health for our peoples.
- The violation of indigenous peoples' prior rights to ancestral territories, lands, waters and resources, including the requirement to obtain our free, prior and informed consent to all programmes and projects affecting our lives and welfare is causing community strife and conflicts. Free and prior informed consent should include the full and effective participation of indigenous women in the decision-making process. Violations of customary use rights, particularly women's access to and control over natural resources has been especially undermined.
- Indigenous peoples are gradually being estranged from our lands, mountains, waters and forests which are sources of wisdom and means of survival. Our knowledge of biodiversity and natural resource management is systematically exploited, appropriated or eroded. Piracy of indigenous arts, crafts and medicines is rampant and is facilitated by patents and other western intellectual property rights.
- The cash economy has eroded indigenous women's independence as self-reliant food producers, healers, artisans and spiritualists, transforming us into vulnerable lowly-paid workers, urban poor and tourist attractions in the market economy.

- Indigenous Peoples, particularly women, are not given our just share of the benefits arising from the sustainable use of surface and sub-surface resources, including waters and forests on indigenous territories.
- Corporate mining has resulted in the displacement of indigenous communities as well as in soil erosion and contamination, water and air pollution, serious health problems, impoverishment and social conflict.
- Illegal logging, private concessions, monoculture plantations and agribusiness ventures are depriving indigenous peoples of lands and livelihoods and seriously eroding our rights.
- National Parks and Protected Areas have displaced indigenous communities, expropriating our lands and denying access to the natural resources critical for our livelihoods and survival. Indigenous women have been disproportionately affected.
- Current forms of tourism make indigenous peoples and women objects of curiosity, display and commercialisation. Prostitution has increased, alongside the inducement to commercialise indigenous cultural heritages. Tourism is breeding cash dependence, especially on children.
- Large dams have serious impacts on the lives, livelihoods, cultures and spiritual existence of indigenous and tribal peoples, who have suffered disproportionately from their negative impacts, while often being excluded from sharing in any benefits. In the Philippines, almost all the larger dams built or proposed are on the lands of indigenous peoples. In India, 40–50% of those displaced by development projects were tribal peoples, who account for just 8% of the nation's 1 billion people.

- Forced displacement of indigenous peoples from our ancestral lands is a major cause of impoverishment and threatens our very survival as indigenous peoples. Indigenous women and children are the most seriously harmed.

Militarization and Violence

- Indigenous women and children in Asia likewise suffer the brunt of militarization perpetrated by state forces, including vigilante groups and private armies of companies. Indigenous communities targeted for development aggression are also targets of militarization.
- Rape continues to be used as a weapon of war by the military to humiliate and attack indigenous communities. Girls and even older women and children are not spared. Courtship and marriage with indigenous women is used to gain acceptance in indigenous communities, however, soldiers often abandon local women and children upon transfer to other destinations.
- Military rule and the establishment of military detachments in our communities has curtailed our movement and economic activities, the entry of food supplies and basic social services and even disrupted the education of our children.
- The military has facilitated the occupation of indigenous territories by non-indigenous settlers, a form of assimilation which breeds conflicts between indigenous and non-indigenous communities.
- Compounding militarization is the war on terror and the passage of national policies or laws restricting the exercise of democratic rights and freedoms of the indigenous women and communities. Our

organizations are regarded by the state to be engaged in terrorist activities. Women leaders suffer persecution and our elders are criminalized for asserting customary practices in defence of our land and resources.

- The Burmese military regime has perpetrated extreme violence against ethnic communities including forced labour, forced relocations, torture and murder. Indigenous women suffer from rapes and sexual violence, including the trafficking of women and forced prostitution.
- The report on the Philippines by Prof. Rodolfo Stavenhagen, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples underlines the continuing militarization of indigenous territories in furtherance of development aggression, particularly the extractive industries. Intensified militarization has resulted in family and community disintegration, human rights violations and hardship.

Violation of the Right to Citizenship of the Tribal Peoples of Thailand

- The right to citizenship of the tribal peoples of Thailand has not been guaranteed by the government; with applicants facing long delays in the processing of documents. Without citizenship, indigenous and tribal peoples are denied their most fundamental rights and entitlements, including access to education and other public services, land and property rights, and social mobility. Under these conditions, indigenous women are rendered extremely vulnerable and marginalised. Urgent government action is needed to redress this situation.

Political Misrepresentation

- Governments have engaged in political misrepresentation of indigenous peoples through the creation of government-controlled structures, the promotion of false and beholden indigenous leaders and deceitful manipulation. Indigenous Peoples' right to free, prior and informed consent has likewise been manipulated and abused.

Lack of access to Basic Social Services

- Indigenous women in many countries face many barriers to the access of education, healthcare and sanitation, and other basic services and are excluded from decision-making on programmes to meet these needs and entitlements.
- Women are marginalised by cultures of patriarchy and violence, which confine women to the domestic sphere.

Outmigration and Loss of Traditional Livelihoods

- Recent extreme climate events and changes in Mongolia have devastated nomadic livestock herding, thus deepening rural poverty and lack of access to basic social services, and accelerating migration to urban centres. The continued survival of traditional livelihoods and cultures is under threat with the rapid transition to market and urban lifestyles.

Physical and Sexual Violence Against Women

- Poverty, which has been exacerbated by globalisation policies, is increasing the vulnerability of indigenous women to violence, both sexual and physical. In search of jobs, many indigenous women are trafficked to other parts of the country, or even across borders and are eventually pushed to prostitution.
- At the same time, indigenous women living in urban centres become victims of wife battering by their husbands, who finding themselves jobless are unable to support their families, become irritable or addicted to drugs and alcohol. Uprooted from the communities, indigenous women who migrate lose the protection afforded by customary laws.

Weakening of Women's Role

- The loss of lands, waters and forests is deepening the poverty of indigenous women while increasing their domestic loads and subsistence responsibilities. We now have to work harder and longer to feed and nurture our families. Many women have become increasingly dependent on their husbands as the primary wage-earners, who have more employment opportunities and higher salaries in the market system. Thus indigenous women's status and power declines, weakening their influence and participation in decision-making.
- The incorporation of indigenous peoples in the cash economy has eroded self-reliant subsistence activities and women's role in production, economy and community life.

- Changes in the traditional social, cultural and political institutions and practices have led to a loss of practices, rules and codes of behaviour which have long been instruments in ensuring gender-sensitive structures. The introduction of western education and religion, and the imposition of alien leadership structures have undermined the role of our indigenous women spiritual leaders and healers, who have provided moral and spiritual guidance through generations, and who were often part of decision-making structures in our communities.
- The declaration of Nepal as a Hindu State, has meant the promulgation of laws, rules and regulations (including the Constitution) based on Hindu values, including cultural norms which consider women as inferior and impure. The government policy of Hinduisation, undermines the egalitarianism of traditional indigenous societies of Nepal, and downgrades the status of indigenous women.

We also agree on the following actions and commitments:

Recognition of Indigenous Peoples Rights to Self-Determination

- To work in unity with indigenous women and peoples in Asia and the world for the recognition of our rights to self-determination.

Policy and Administrative Reform

- We will actively engage in policy advocacy and reform in all political arenas, and at all levels, to gain full respect and recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples, including indigenous women to self-determination and for social and ecological justice and peace.

- We will work for an end to racial, cultural, religious and gender discrimination, and all its manifestations in public policy and practices.
- We will work for the amendment of constitutional provisions and conflicting laws to make these consistent with the internationally recognised rights of indigenous peoples. Customary laws should likewise be recognised in national and international legislation.

Citizenship Rights

- We uphold that all indigenous women and men are entitled to be free and equal to all others in terms of dignity and rights. Every indigenous person has the right to belong to a nationality, and to enjoy legal status and to be granted citizenship of the country where they live, if they so wish.

Renewal and Revitalization of Traditional Cultures, Customary Laws, Social Values and Practices.

- We accept the challenge and responsibility to address cultural renewal and revitalization to promote gender-sensitive values and structures within our communities. We note with concern that some modern changes in our traditional social, cultural and political institutions and practices have led to a loss of values and codes of behaviour which uphold gender-sensitive structures and roles, while accepting our responsibility to change other customary laws and practices which oppress indigenous women. We will speak up against abusive treatment of indigenous women in the name of custom and tradition.

- To unify and educate women, children and youth in our communities about our cultures and identity as the basis of our struggles and rights to land, territory and resources.
- We will work with our traditional institutions to raise the respect, recognition and status of indigenous women who are knowledgeable about traditional resource management, biodiversity conservation, food security and the health system.
- We will strive towards working with our traditional leaders and institutions to ensure that women are not disinherited from family properties, nor used to propagate social status through bride-price or dowry.
- We will revitalise traditional support systems against domestic violence and work towards removing prejudice and negative perceptions of indigenous peoples and women which undermine our pride and self-confidence.

Campaigns against Development Aggression and Militarization

- We will conduct campaigns against development aggression and militarization and for the defense of our lands, resources and cultures from destruction and assimilation.
- We demand proper rehabilitation and compensation for lands and waters despoiled by destructive development projects;
- We demand the pull-out of military troops, checkpoints and detachments in our territories;
- We demand justice and accountability for criminal offenses perpetrated by the Armed Forces and para-military groups and to indemnify victims of political repressions and sexual violence;

- Expose and oppose repressive and undemocratic anti-terrorism bills
- We demand protection from transmigration and resettlement of outside settlers on indigenous peoples territories
- We demand a share of all benefits taken from our lands, waters and territories.

Peace-building and Conflict Resolution

- We do not see ourselves as simply victims, we are survivors of our struggles against militarization and for peace-building. We participate in peace-making efforts in support of our peoples.
- We recognise and respect indigenous women's contributions to peace building and conflict resolution. We will engender indigenous conflict resolution and peace-building processes and ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous women in peace processes and accords entered into by our people and communities.
- We call for increased international pressure on the Burmese military regime to stop its military offensives in territories of indigenous peoples and violent crimes against indigenous women.

Appropriate Social Services

- We will promote education in indigenous mother-tongue languages and the transmission of indigenous cultures.
- We call upon governments to implement their international commitments on education, with due regard for the special needs for education of indigenous children.

- Promote and develop indigenous healing practices, such as the use of herbal medicines, and work for the effective protection of indigenous knowledge from piracy and patenting.
- Awareness programmes must be carried out to change the mindset of communities and the government to address the special needs of indigenous peoples.

Recommendations to the Indigenous Peoples' Movement and Organisations

We will continue to strengthen our organisations solidarity linkages, build our awareness and sustain our campaigns against development aggression, militarization and ethnocide at national, regional and international levels.

Research and Documentation

- Conduct specific studies on the impact of conflicts on women and children, and the role of indigenous women in conflict resolution, peace building and sustainable development.
- Intensify research activities by indigenous peoples on our priority issues and concerns.

Empowerment of Indigenous Women for Leadership

- Empower indigenous women to exercise our life skills, in health, education and decision-making and to play our important roles in our families, communities and the indigenous peoples' movement.
- Carry out gender-sensitivity programmes within indigenous organisations and communities.

- Strengthen indigenous women's participation in all aspects of leadership and governance. Special meetings, leadership training as well as other training courses and exposure programmes should be organised.
- In terms of participation, a quota for women should be allocated, and when projects or meetings are going on, nursery facilities should be provided.
- Women will be encouraged to take up decision-making positions, after gaining the necessary confidence.
- The role and perception of women should not follow stereotypes and women who are qualified and experienced should be selected as leaders.

08 March 2004

Baguio City, Philippines

Signed by 100 indigenous women participating from the Asian region.