Asia Indigenous Peoples Caucus Statement
16 May 2006

ITEM no 3: Millennium Development Goals and Indigenous Peoples: Redefining the Goals

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This is to inform the members of the UNPF, governments, UN agencies and others that an Asia Indigenous Peoples Preparatory meeting on the UNPF was held on April 7-10, 2006 in Indonesia. This meeting was attended by representatives of indigenous peoples from the different countries of the region, as well as the two indigenous expert members of the UNPF from the Asia Region. This regional meeting discussed the MDGs in relation to indigenous peoples which is reflected in this statement. Because of time limitation, this statement will dwell more on the recommendations to the UNPF and a longer report of the Asian IP caucus will be submitted directly to the members of the UNPF.

MDG target on Health Issues – Goals 4, 5 and 6.

The situation of indigenous peoples in Asia in relation to health can be summarized as follows:

1. Lack of access to adequate and culturally appropriate health care services. There are very few and ill-equipped health centers and health personnel in indigenous territories;
2. Discriminatory behavior of health personnel towards indigenous peoples and discrimination against traditional health and healing practices;
3. There are serious health problems caused by environmental issues such as pesticides, chemical fertilizers, pollution from toxic mine tailings, toxic substances such as the agent orange in Vietnam, among others;
4. Very few indigenous individuals become health professionals and in areas where there are, there is a problem of brain drain such as the case of the Philippines;
5. Increasing cases of HIV/AIDS because of drug addiction and sexual trafficking as well as increasing migration as in the case of North East India, Thailand and Burma;
6. Immunization programs are very inadequate or are used improperly;
7. There are also cultural practices which have negative impacts on health such as practices related to sanitation and hygiene;
8. Use of indigenous peoples as guinea pigs in experimental drugs and the use of birth control methods without the knowledge of people such as in the case of Burma, Bangladesh and North-East India;
9. Collection of genetic materials (DNA) of indigenous peoples through the National Geographic and IBM program and also through the Human Genome Project –
SNP (Single Nucleic Polymorphism) without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples, such as in the Philippines, India, Indonesia and others

Recommendations of the Asia Indigenous Peoples’ Caucus to the Permanent Forum and the Members of the Inter-Agency Support Group

1. The Asia IP caucus supports the recommendations of the Permanent Forum on health issues, and urge governments, UN agencies and those concern to immediately adopt and implement these recommendations with urgency in order to abate the worsening health situation of indigenous peoples;

2. The Asia IP caucus would like to make these additional recommendations

   a. To facilitate a more comprehensive study on the issue of increasing incidents of HIV/AIDS amongst indigenous peoples because of drug addiction, prostitution and increasing migrant workers as in the case of Northeast India, border areas of Thailand/Burma, and make concrete recommendations to address these concerns, based on the result of the study;

   b. To request for more thorough documentation on cultural practices which are harmful to health of indigenous peoples and to recommend concrete programs to be launched to stop these practices with the cooperation and support of indigenous peoples;

   c. To recommend a more interactive and increased engagement of indigenous peoples with the WHO Regional Office in Bangkok and also with WHO national offices to make sure that they implement the recommendations on health from the UNPF and also from the Second Decade Programme of Action relating to health issues;

   d. To request concerned agencies and private entities to provide more information on the Human Genome Project, the National Geographic and IBM project on collection of genetic materials of indigenous peoples, and to have this information be disseminated to indigenous peoples;

   e. In relation to the above, for the UNPF to look into the collections already taken on the Human Genome Project and to make sure that these are not patented by biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies and also to monitor that these genetic materials are returned to indigenous peoples if they request. A code of conduct should be formulated under the auspices of the Permanent Forum to regulate the practice of collecting human genetic materials of indigenous peoples;

   f. To recommend that bio-prospecting and collection of indigenous peoples’ traditional medicinal plants and seeds should not be done without the free,
prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples. Those which have been taken away from indigenous peoples’ territories should be investigated and proper compensation to communities from which these biological resources have been taken should be provided.

g. To follow-up cases filed against governments or companies which sprayed toxic materials on indigenous peoples’ territories (i.e. Agent Orange, etc.) should be followed up to ensure that the victims of these are properly compensated and guaranteed full medical treatment;

h. To strongly recommend that traditional healing and health practices of indigenous peoples should be integrated into health care delivery services and support for training more indigenous peoples to provide health services should be undertaken.

**MDG targets : Ensure environment sustainability and global partnership for development : Goal 7 and 8**

Various projects, programmes and policies of Asian governments in partnership with private corporations and international funders have been seriously affecting environment sustainability and development of indigenous peoples, especially in the utilization, management and development of indigenous lands and resources. These projects and programmes include commercial agriculture such as mono-cropping, commercial tree plantations, oil palm plantations and others; development and operation of large scale mining; construction and operation of large dams, and water privatization policies.

These projects and policies are being undertaken without the meaningful participation of indigenous peoples in the any decision making processes. Likewise, these are being implemented without the Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPCI) of affected indigenous communities.

The impacts of these projects, programmes and policies are the following: loss of vital forest resources, pollution of land and water by pesticides and chemical fertilizers, loss of land rights and livelihoods, destruction of traditional forest management systems, decrease in fishery resources, human rights violations, depletion or pollution or water sources, and denial of access to resources. Its adverse impacts to the environment and to indigenous peoples, particularly on land tenure, food security, health and sustainable livelihood sources are causing more poverty and economic marginalization, than development or progress of indigenous peoples. Further, the forced implementation of these projects with the use of military and other armed groups, divide and rule tactics have caused more violations to the civil and political rights of indigenous peoples, and destroying the collectives and cohesion of indigenous communities.
It is also important to highlight the non-accountability of private companies, investors and funders to the adverse impacts of projects, policies and programmes implemented or supported by them; and the absence of mechanisms and provisions for proper compensation and rehabilitation on environmental and social impacts.

Because of the worsening poverty of indigenous peoples brought about by a development paradigm imposed upon them, it is critically important to develop global partnership under a human rights-based approach to development, while ensuring environmental integrity and respect to mother earth.

The Asia indigenous peoples caucus thereby recommends the following to the UNPF:

1. To recommend a policy that shall protect indigenous peoples from trade liberalization and to include special treatment to resources and products of indigenous peoples;

2. To recommend a policy for the protection of intellectual property rights of indigenous peoples on trade and others;

3. To recommend the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on agriculture and indigenous peoples, who shall:
   a) conduct investigation on the palm oil development, commercial tree plantations, mono-cropping and the like, on its impacts to indigenous peoples especially on land tenure, resource management and livelihoods, and on biodiversity conservation
   b) promote indigenous practices on sustainable agriculture and the further development of such, including livelihood generation appropriate for indigenous peoples;

4. To develop indicators for the implementation of the principles and substance of the Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in all development projects planned in indigenous territories. Likewise, to strongly recommend accountability and liability of those who consciously engage in the manipulation of the FPIC process; and that an independent body be created at the country level to monitor and evaluate the conduct of FPIC processes. It is important that the UNPF underscore the urgency to have the FPIC adopted by governments, UN agencies and funders, as a matter of social justice.

5. To recommend a moratorium on funding of destructive large infrastructure and extractive industries in indigenous territories until a clear policy on the recognition of land rights and resource management of indigenous peoples is in place. There should also be no funding to infrastructure projects in countries with gross violations of indigenous peoples rights especially on land and resources, resulting to their further impoverishment.
6. To recommend to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to adopt an IP policy and ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in the formulation of its plans, programmes and policies.

7. To support and monitor developments in the inspection panel investigation of the World Bank regarding its Industrial Forest Project in Cambodia;

Finally, the Asia Indigenous peoples caucus fully supports the 11 recommendations in the statement on Redefining the MDGs: Indigenous peoples and International Financial Institutions submitted by Tebtebba Foundation, Forest Peoples Programme, Saami Council and other organizations.