STATEMENT OF THE UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES (UNPFII) ON AGENDA ITEM 4.7. PROTECTED AREAS

May 22, 2008
Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Chairperson

Thank you Madame Chair for giving the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to make a statement on protected areas.

While the Program of Work on Protected Areas and MDG Goal 7 and the Parties who spoke today call for the accelerated expansion of protected areas, indigenous peoples have already stated in their opening plenary statement that they oppose the establishment of new protected areas in indigenous lands and territories until their rights, contained in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, are fully recognized and respected.

The Permanent Forum received numerous reports of indigenous peoples who have been displaced from their own forests because these have been declared as protected areas or carbon forests. Even the practice of their traditional livelihoods in the forests, such as rotational agriculture and hunting and gathering, have been criminalized in some countries. Such practices still continue especially in the light of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and Joint Implementation, which includes the establishment of carbon sinks or carbon offsets.

We heard the reports of the Parties this morning many of you have expressed the need to ensure that the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in managing protected areas is ensured, we note that the draft decisions contained in Document 9/1/Add.2 several paragraphs, such as 5.a. and b, which refer to the establishment of co-managed protected areas and indigenous and local community conserved areas within the protected area system are bracketed. Since these are bracketed the Forum respectfully suggests that a new paragraph be made to replace these two paragraphs with one which says

5 (a) bis: “Recognize, support and enhance the contributions of indigenous peoples to the conservation of biological and cultural diversity through their natural resource management practices, customary use of forests and indigenous governance systems.”

We strongly support paragraph 5(d) which says “Establish effective processes for the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities, in full respect of their rights and recognition of their responsibilities, in the governance of protected areas, consistent with national law and applicable international obligations.”.
There are other proposals from the indigenous peoples present here which we support but which we won’t have time to read. So I will just reiterate these in this statement but I will not read it now in the interest of time.

8.e.bis. Carry out a survey of all existing protected areas to gauge the extent to which they have alienated land from the territories of indigenous and local communities, as a basis for redress and restitution for such unjust acts.

10. Invites the Global Environmental Facility

c. bis. To review its policies and practices in relation to indigenous and local communities and protected areas and report it as soon as possible as mandated in decision COP/V111/24 and paragraph 22 (d).

d. and its implementing agencies to report on the progress in support to the community conserved areas and indigenous bio-cultural heritage areas, as mandated in decision COP V111/24, paragraph 22 (d).

e. Allocate funds for studies on the impacts of protected areas projects funded by bilateral and multilateral financial institutions on the rights and livelihoods of indigenous and local communities.

13.bis. Invite (s) international and regional development banks, bilateral and multilateral donors, and international financial institutions to report on the progress in ensuring coherence in their institutional policies on protected areas and investment projects.

In conclusion, Madame Chair, we accept the challenge given to the Forum by the indigenous peoples inviting the Forum to study and report the potential impacts that the innovative financial mechanisms for protected areas, have on indigenous peoples and local communities.