



The Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Rights-based Sustainable Development

A Southeast Asia Forum on the Challenges & Opportunities with Indigenous Knowledge, Systems & Practices and Rights-based Sustainable Development

October 8-9, 2019
Westlake Resort, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Yogyakarta Declaration

We, Indigenous Peoples, Civil Society Organisations; International Organisations; Academe; representatives of National Human Rights Institutions from Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines and Timor Leste; Business; and Media, coming from nine countries in Southeast and East Asia, gathered together in a forum in Yogyakarta, Indonesia on 8-9 October 2019 on “**The Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Rights-Based Sustainable Development**”, are:

MINDFUL that, in the Asian region, Indigenous Peoples are referred to by various names, such as tribal peoples, hill tribes, scheduled tribes, *janajati*, *orang asli*, *orang asal*, *masyarakat adat*, *masyarakat hukum adat*, *adivasis*, ethnic minorities or nationalities;

AWARE of the transformative potential and proven practices of indigenous knowledge¹ in addressing the challenges of the daily economic, social, cultural and political hurdles, including adapting to the impacts of ongoing climate crisis and loss of biodiversity amidst continuing assaults on the civil and political rights faced by indigenous communities, and adapting to their impacts;

CRITICAL of the ways in which the existing economic and financial capitalist system have caused and / or worsened these challenges and the recognition of the need for workable alternatives to the existing socio-economic-political order;

GIVEN that indigenous knowledge cannot be separated from the other rights of Indigenous Peoples especially their rights to land, territories and resources; right to self-determination including self-determined development and the implementation of Free, Prior and Informed Consent; and the right to cultural integrity and heritage, which are all fundamental and basic prerequisites in realizing rights-based sustainable development;

AWARE that local communities are similarly marginalized as Indigenous Peoples and their rights, though distinct in nature, also need to be addressed;

RECOGNISE that challenges to indigenous knowledge, particularly its ongoing commodification, misappropriation and misuse, impact on the integrity of the cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples;

¹ Indigenous Knowledge is defined as an accumulation of collective knowledge and experiences that have been continuously tested and improved by experimentations, diversifications and transformations through generations (AMAN presentation in day 1)



DETERMINED to push for greater recognition, respect, protection, support and promotion of indigenous knowledge as mandated and needs to be implemented by Parties to international instruments and platforms such as Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Paris Agreement including through the Green Climate Fund and the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform thereby also opening up opportunities for Indigenous Peoples;

EMPHASIZING the importance and complementarity of the roles of indigenous elders, women and the youth in reviving and transforming customary governance systems, in ensuring inter-generational transfer of indigenous knowledge including by establishing indigenous schools and other educational spaces; revising existing curricula as appropriate; deploying new approaches in instruction, including new technologies in information dissemination and the use of media in enhancing indigenous literacy amongst indigenous and non-indigenous communities, and integration of indigenous knowledge in conventional climate services;

MINDFUL that, at the regional level in Southeast Asia, some States continue to be unwilling to recognize Indigenous Peoples exhibiting a continuing lack of political will to further enhance its position on the issue and to welcome their active involvement in policy discussions concerning their well-being and economic development;

EXTREMELY CONCERNED about the increasing instances of threats and violence against indigenous communities particularly environment and human rights defenders plus the intensifying criminalization of communities exerting efforts to conserve and maintain whatever is left of their territories with the ongoing threat of large-scale economic activities, large-scale infrastructure and development projects, and external conservation initiatives that largely displace indigenous communities as well as conservation initiatives that have similar negative impacts on indigenous communities;

SUPPORTIVE of the efforts of national human rights institutions in continuing comprehensive national inquiries or cases monitor, investigations, researches, and continued awareness-raising among government agencies and corporations of their obligations concerning human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples while finding ways to elevate these concerns to the level of other regional and international bodies and continuing promotion of the achievement of the SDGs and access to justice;

WHEREFORE, in view of these premises, we have come up with the following views, sentiments and updates on the specific topics that we took up in small-group discussions and break-out sessions during the forum:

Culture Values and Identity

REAFFIRMING that the existence of indigenous knowledge rest on how the next generation especially the young at present re-root itself to its indigenous history and culture, relive the traditions and reposition itself in the modern setting, and ensure



continuing dissemination to enable a wise and creative resistance in defending cultural identity.

Food Sovereignty

ASSERTING that food sovereignty not only rest on how we freely govern our territories but also requires the security of Indigenous Peoples to our ancestral domains and territories and the protection of the integrity of indigenous knowledge and the role of women as knowledge-keepers and that traditional food systems, including protection of local seeds and genetic resources, are also shielded from the domination of industrial agriculture and the pervasiveness of the culture of consumption. The loss of food varieties and eroding local knowledge on farming practices are but the results of continuing displacement of our communities from their traditional grounds by plantations, extractive industries and other development impacts, including overfishing and invasive alien species.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

ENSURING the meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples as rights-holders in decision-making processes at all levels and avoid top-down approach in planning and implementation. More importantly, Indigenous Peoples should be always visible in all these plans acknowledging that the SDGs also offer opportunities and possible collaborative partnerships among Indigenous Peoples' organisations and other entities

Mining & Rights to Resources

NOTING the assessment by Stockholm Environment Institute on how rights in extractive industries are claimed by local communities in some countries in South and Southeast Asia show some positive outcomes; While in Indonesia, the effort of the national human rights institutions in conducting a national inquiry the rights of indigenous peoples over forest zones in 40 case studies including several complaints against the activities of mining companies have yielded concrete recommendations that are addressed by some government agencies;

RECOGNISING that further discussions in this Forum on access to resources demonstrate the importance of ensuring that the rights of Indigenous Peoples are recognised and strengthened including on ongoing efforts in the utilisation of biological resource and indigenous knowledge through new technologies, in the face of continuing biopiracy and privatization of the lands of the commons;

Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience

RECOGNISING that Indigenous Peoples have contributed the least to greenhouse gas emissions but the impacts of climate change are already exacerbating their vulnerabilities aside from causing additional threats and loss and damage to their lands and territories including indigenous knowledge. Whilst, false solutions especially dams and land-grabs are intensifying, thereby increasing the need for greater recognition and support of Indigenous Peoples' rights for them to defend their lands, territories and resources, recognition of



rights and recognise that indigenous knowledge also provide solutions to significantly enhance their resilience and adaptation.

FINALLY, to enable these views, sentiments and updates to be easily acted upon and monitored by all concerned, from the government, national human rights institutions, UN agencies and institutions and our own respective organizations, we all agree to put forward the following:

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Denial of the importance of indigenous knowledge is a reflection of historical and continued discrimination of Indigenous Peoples as primitive, uneducated and ignorant, therefore we recommend to:

The Governments

1. To continue to recognise, respect, protect and fulfill Indigenous Peoples' rights specifically to their indigenous knowledge systems and practices as articulated in, among others, article 30 of UNDRIP, and maintaining their importance and relevance in consideration with other knowledge systems;
2. To support and assist Indigenous Peoples to undertake the necessary protection measures in addressing the continuing erosion of local languages and support their revival through formal, informal and other means, and through inclusive language policies;
3. To ensure equal support for every Indigenous and ethnic group without any discrimination;
4. To genuinely and meaningfully implement and mainstream Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in development and policies;
5. To ensure Indigenous Peoples' rights to their resources including the right to access and manage these resources;
6. To recognize, respect and promote the rights of Indigenous Peoples within the 2030 Agenda, as well as support processes to ensure accountability, incorporate and implement these rights, and develop national action plans on the SDGs with the meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples as well as collect and disaggregate data on Indigenous Peoples;
7. To ensure the meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples as rights-holders in decision-making processes at all levels and avoid top-down approach in planning and implementation. To further realize this, Indigenous Peoples should be always visible in all plans carrying out SDGs acknowledging that the SDGs also offer opportunities and possible collaborative partnerships among Indigenous Peoples' organisations and other entities;
8. To enhance ambition in their nationally-determined contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement and ensure recognition and respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples



and ensure Green Climate Fund Country Programmes include national priorities of Indigenous Peoples and support for direct and simplified access for resources;

9. To fully support the UNFCCC Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform and provide tangible political, financial and administrative support to ensure that Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices will inform the implementation of national determined contributions (NDCs); and
10. To work closely with and specifically deploy resources in terms of funds and personnel to realize the aspirations of Indigenous Peoples particularly those enumerated below that are to be acted upon by the indigenous peoples groups/organizations and their support groups, including civil society organizations.

The National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)

1. To continuously enhance the awareness of government agencies and state institutions on their obligation to respect, protect and fulfill Indigenous Peoples' rights;
2. To enhance the awareness of Indigenous Peoples on their rights and educate them on the mechanisms for claiming these rights;
3. To promote Indigenous Peoples rights in every level of society to build a culture of rights; and
4. To mainstream human rights and sustainable development goals (SDGs) and human rights to enhance Indigenous Peoples' rights.

The Indigenous Peoples groups/organizations and their support groups, including civil society organizations

1. To defend their indigenous knowledge and the environment to promote not only their prosperity but also that of the global community;
2. To strengthen solidarity and maintain diversity to continue to fight for social justice;
3. To develop *Sekolah Adat* or school of living traditions, and family as channels for the maintenance of Indigenous Peoples' values and culture, including urban-rural youth learning and exchange;
4. To ensure food sovereignty by reviving local farming practices and local food production and gathering practices;
5. To plant and grow local seeds and crops as a resistance to import food domination and protection of local genetic resources;
6. To build the resilience of Indigenous Peoples through climate change mitigation and adaptation actions, through the strengthening of IKSPs;
7. To strengthen access to resources by building capacity and capability to manage and control the resources;



8. To incorporate SDGs into Indigenous Peoples advocacy by developing targets and indicators at the local level which reflect the interests and priorities of Indigenous Peoples;
9. To participate in the national implementation process, action plan and review process, and build capacity of Indigenous Peoples organizations to promote and protect the rights, welfare and self-determined development of Indigenous Peoples in SDG processes;
10. To coordinate among civil society organisations, Indigenous Peoples organisations, and develop common proposals for inclusion in SDG national actions plans in relation to the implementation of the UNDRIP, World Commission on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) Outcome document and self-determined development of indigenous based on the SDG Goals and targets;
11. To collaborate with the national statistical offices to ensure the collection of disaggregated data based on indigenous identity in national surveys and censuses as well as community-based monitoring and information systems and develop complementary national indicators to monitor specific aspects of Indigenous Peoples' rights and development based on ethnicity;
12. To undertake participatory community-based data collection to track and report progress in indigenous communities using the indigenous navigator tools;
13. To conduct advocacy, campaigns and media outreach to generate public attention to the issues, concerns and aspirations of Indigenous Peoples in relation to the SDGs;
14. To engage in national consultation processes and reporting to the Voluntary National Review at the High Level Political Forum;
15. To establish partnerships to support self-determined development of Indigenous Peoples-community initiated social enterprises for income generation, community managed renewable energy, conservation and management of biodiversity, food security etc in line with the needs and priorities of indigenous communities;
16. To document good practices in the use and enhancement of traditional knowledge and innovations such as on sustainable resource management and conservation, food security, community development etc for submission and support under the Science and Technology Innovations for the Means of Implementation (Mol);

To United Nations/ UN agencies/UN country teams

1. To open links and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples for support and partnership in the implementation of the SDGs in line with the needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples.

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