

BAGUIO DECLARATION

Reclaim our Rights to Land, Resources and Ecological Sustainability

“Protecting the rights of the poor should take precedence over corporate greed. Genuine development must prioritize the need to ensure ecological sustainability over market profitability. We must never sacrifice people and the environment for short-term benefit of the few.” - Fr. Edwin Gariguez, a Catholic priest who led a group of indigenous and community leaders in 2009 in an 11-day hunger strike to protest large-scale mining in Mindoro, and recipient of the 2012 Goldman Environmental Prize.

These words resonate as we, participants of the Baguio Environmental Summit, unite and resolve to continue our struggle to reclaim our rights to land, resources and a sustainable environment in the City of Baguio.

We are alarmed that Baguio’s environment is now in deep crisis, reaching such a state of environmental degradation, that we experience daily its stark impacts. We suffer the evidences of urban blight such as the garbage problem, the lack of water, dying rivers, the poor air quality, traffic and congestion, the increase in natural disasters, food insecurity, unemployment, homelessness, shrinking forest areas and watersheds, and biodiversity loss. These phenomena are clear signs that we may be crossing critical boundaries and approaching dangerous tipping points in the state of the city’s, if not the planet’s, environment.

We are concerned that the limited land and resources of Baguio City, originally indigenous peoples ancestral territory and designed as a colonial hill station to serve a population of 25,000, are now stretched beyond its limits. The carrying capacity of the city has already been exceeded. We believe that the development of Baguio City’s land and resources should be managed and planned in a rationale, cohesive and holistic manner to take into consideration the welfare of the people, of future generations and the sustainability of the environment.

We are aghast at the wanton disregard by government officials of the people’s sentiments in giving priority to profit- generating development for a few elite corporations over the needs and welfare of the majority of the people. We hold the public authorities accountable for their failure to stop this reckless violation of the rights of the Baguio people to land, resources and a healthy environment.

We condemn the manipulation of land tenurial instruments in the city to give favor to the rich and powerful over the rightful ownership claims and access rights of indigenous peoples, actual occupants, settlers and other bona fide residents of the city.

In our desire for a Baguio City that is progressive, sustainable and responsive to the needs and sentiments of its people; in our deep respect for Mother Nature, its ecological balance and integrity of creation; and after thorough and all-rounded discussions and deliberations while keeping the common good of the people of Baguio in mind;

We now forward our recommendations, with the expectation that these serve as a guide for our policy-makers, decision-makers and urban planners, as well as our own respective organizations in defining the future development plans of Baguio City.

On Land Use:

1. Ensure that the Comprehensive Land Use Plan of Baguio strikes the proper balance between economic development and environmental protection. Ensure that the remaining forest cover, watershed areas and parks of the city are protected, conserved and further developed, while

regulating the need for residential, institutional and commercial zones. Conduct wider consultations with the people and communities affected in the formulation of laws, policies, projects and programs on land use.

2. Conduct a comprehensive study and enact appropriate legislation to reconcile conflicting land surveys, land use, titles, townsite sales applications and other tenurial instruments of land disposition in the city. Implement and fast-track programs to recognize indigenous peoples land rights while addressing the perennial problem of squatting through mass housing and recognition of rights of actual occupants. Initiate dialogues between the Ibaloi land claimants and settlers in ancestral lands towards resolving issues of ownership and acquisition. Declare a moratorium on demolitions

3. Investigate illegal and anomalous land transactions, land grabbing, graft and corrupt practices in the disposition of land in the city. Punish those accountable for these crimes and initiate measures of redress to correct the injustices committed against rightful landowners and occupants. Uphold the Ibaloi people's struggle for justice over the dispossession of their ancestral lands.

4. Conduct widespread public consultations in Baguio to surface the true sentiments of the people before any further action is taken by Congress to approve the proposed Baguio City Charter.

5. Conduct geo-hazard mapping to determine dangerous land areas in Baguio as a basis for disaster risk reduction and preparedness, while ensuring that this is not mis-used to justify relocation and/or demolition of informal settlers and rightful owners.

On Garbage and Waste Management:

1. Conduct a comprehensive study and hold public consultations and multisectoral dialogues towards arriving at a sustainable solution to the garbage problem of the city. Close down, clean up and rehabilitate the Irisan dumpsite to make it safe for community residents and surrounding barangays.

2. Intensify programs to reduce, reuse and recycle waste in the city. Encourage and support viable household-level and community-level initiatives, as well as indigenous and innovative practices of waste management as an integral part of the comprehensive program of waste management of the city, including the use of vermiculture, the eco-compost receptacle and residual waste terrace.

3. Promote alternative materials such as bayong, paper bags and other alternatives to plastics and Styrofoam in the city of Baguio, and assert political will for the implementation of the law on the use of plastics.

4. Hold the government accountable for the millions of pesos budget allocated for waste management and information, education campaign. Ensure multisectoral collaboration in waste management and form a working group to study the budget, where is it going to ensure that it is used for its real purpose of waste management.

5. Conduct community grassroots organizing for waste management at the source.

On Management of Land, Water and Natural Resources:

1. Give recognition to the importance of trees in the development of Baguio and their indispensable role in maintaining the environment, land, air and water resources of Baguio City, as well as in mitigating carbon emissions, global warming and climate change.
2. Ensure that development plans of Baguio City promote equitable access, use, management and benefit-sharing of the city's natural resources and address the identified priority needs of the city's populace. Guard against attempts to monopolize resources for profit by a few private and foreign corporations and the powerful elite. Conduct a grassroots- based campaign for sustainable pro-people development by starting in our own little ways.
3. Revoke the permit given to SM Prime Holdings for its expansion project. Stop the cutting and earthballing of trees in Luneta Hill and rehabilitate the forest to return it to its original condition. Investigate the status and legality of SM Prime Holding's land ownership over Luneta Hill and surrounding areas. Promote good governance and hold the concerned City officials, the DENR and other government officials and agencies accountable for their decisions and wrongdoings.
4. Conduct public consultations as a standard operating procedure and ensure that the free, prior and informed consent of affected communities is obtained before any development program or project is implemented in the city. Declare a moratorium on large-scale development in the city.
5. Promote clean and green development, environmental education programs in the schools and communities, indigenous knowledge and practices in natural resource management, and grassroots involvement in environmental management. Promote sustainable urban agriculture.
6. Revive and strengthen the consumerism movement in Baguio City for people to become responsible for the things they buy and use and for each of us to look into our lifestyles and responsibility in the use of our resources.
7. Ensure equitable allocation and distribution of water resources and take measures to protect the water quality in the city of Baguio.
8. Consider urban planning on a wider scale such as the Baguio-La Trinidad-Itogon-Sablan-Tuba-Tublay (BLISTT) framework for development, as a way to ease the increasing pressure on the carrying capacity of Baguio, while giving a proper place to pro-people development, environmental sustainability and indigenous heritage values of the people of Baguio and the adjacent municipalities.

These recommendations come with the guidance of the words of Macliing Dulag, the Kalinga leader who was killed on April 24, 1980 for his militant opposition to the construction of the Chico Dams. He said: ***"What is the most precious thing to man? Life! If life is threatened, what ought a man do? Fight! This he must do, otherwise he is dishonored. That will be worse than death. If we do not fight and the dams push through, we die anyway. If we fight, we die honorably. Thus I exhort you all then "KAYAW!" (Struggle!)"***

Done in observance of Earth Day (April 22) and Cordillera Day (April 24), on this 22nd day of April 2012 in UP Baguio, Baguio City.

Attached: Participating organizations and individuals