



# CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

*For the Defense of the Ancestral Domain and for Self Determination*

## **Peace, Development Issues Highlight IP Day 2011**

Various indigenous groups and organizations in the Philippines gathered from August 6- 9, 2011 in Manila to light up the national celebration of the 11<sup>th</sup> World's Indigenous Peoples Day. More than a hundred participants composed of indigenous leaders, elders, women and youth representatives of different peoples' organizations and advocates from different parts of the country participated in the activity. The series of events were organized by the Philippine UNDRIP Network through Tebtebba Foundation, Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA), Koalisyon ng Katutubong Samahan sa Pilipinas (KASAPI), Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan sa Pilipinas (KAMP), Philippine Task Force for Indigenous Peoples Rights, SILDAP, National Network of Indigenous Women's Organization (BAI), KATRIBU Partylist, and the National Cultural Communities Committee of the House of Representatives (HoR).

This year's celebration carried the theme, "Indigenous Peoples Day 2011: Working Towards Genuine Peace and Development". Highlights of the four-day event include a presentation of UP Baguio on the preliminary recommendations to the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) evaluation; presentation and discussions on the state of indigenous peoples in the country and recent developments in the global arena, and on the efforts of developing new policy guidelines on Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), and the consultation of indigenous peoples with the peace panels of the Government of the Philippines (GPh), National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The Indigenous Peoples Agenda, created in 2010, was further updated during the celebration, for re-submission to Pres. Aquino, the peace panels of the GPh, NDFP and MILF; to legislators in Congress and to the NCIP for their steps in reforming the institution to truly serve its mandate and address indigenous peoples issues.

### **Addressing the Roots of the Armed Conflict Towards Just and Lasting Peace**

The indigenous peoples' consultation with the NDFP and GPh took place on August 8 at the House of Representatives, where NDFP's Rafael Baylosis, and GPh's Ednar Dayanghirang presented their drafts on the Socio-Economic Reform (SER), which is the third substantive agenda in the ongoing peace negotiations.

This was followed by various responses from indigenous peoples' representatives, who spoke on the issues of mining plunder, militarization and human rights, indigenous women, social services, development aggression and ancestral land rights. Some of the speakers were victims themselves of human rights abuses. In the afternoon, indigenous peoples' consultation with the GPh and MILF peace panels followed, in spite of the absence of the GPh representative. Present was Datu Kinoc, an alternative member of the MILF panel, who discussed updates and perspectives on the Moro struggle for self-determination, including the proposal for a Bangsa Moro Sub-state by the MILF. Various indigenous peoples' representatives from Mindanao also presented their issues and concerns to the peace panels.

The peace talks and advancing indigenous peoples' rights were a major concern in various activities held last year, specifically for the articulation of an Indigenous Peoples Agenda on the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. These include the IP Agenda by the CPA, KATRIBU and KAMP formally submitted to and received by the Office of the President on August 5, 2010, and the Philippine UNDRIP Network to an official emissary of Pres.

Aquino on August 9, 2010; the State of the Indigenous Peoples Address in July 2010 by the Legal Rights Center, and the National IP Agenda in the same month by the Assisi Foundation. These organizations among others resulted in the formation of a Consultative Group on Indigenous Peoples (CGIP) convened by Cong. Teddy Brawner Baguilat, Chairperson of the House Committee on National Cultural Communities. On October 24, the CGIP consolidated these said agenda in a National IP Consensus Policy Agenda, and formulated its Action Plan in the National Indigenous Peoples Summit last March 21-23.

A major concern in all these is the issue of peace and development and genuine participation and recognition of IPs rights in the peace talks between Parties to the armed conflict (the GRP, NDFP, and the MILF). Specifically, these call for substantial discussion of the situation, rights, demands and aspirations of IPs in the peace talks; genuine participation and consultation of IPs in the formulation of agreements between said Parties especially those that impact on IPs such as the GRP-NDFP Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER); and creation of appropriate mechanisms for IPs to ensure such participation and of full recognition of IPs rights.

“We want peace that is not simply the absence of war or hostilities or the silencing of guns. Peace is, above all, the well being of every woman, man and child. It lies in the just and equitable distribution of the earth’s resources,” said KATRIBU President Beverly Longid, adding that “peace begins when the hungry are fed and when the thirst for justice is quenched. Genuine peace is only possible in a society where justice is nurtured by the dignity of every human being – free from poverty, violations and other evils borne out by greed and insatiable crave for power.”

### **IP Day Celebration at the HoR, Mendiola**

August 9, the International Day of the Worlds’ Indigenous Peoples, was marked with a program at the House of Representatives participated in by government agencies, legislators, UN bodies, NGOs and indigenous peoples representatives. Here, a dialogue was held between some of the legislators and IP delegates, after a presentation of the IP legislative agenda and legislative actions and updates. The IP legislative agenda consisted of urgent issues of IPs needing action by Congress, including the following proposals:

1. Review of the 2006 FPIC Guidelines to ensure that IP concerns are taken on board.
2. Review of how the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) and executive orders have been implemented and its impacts on indigenous peoples.
3. Review of existing laws, which do not adhere to the rights of indigenous peoples, including, among others, the Revised Forestry Code, the Fisheries Code, the NIPAS Act, the National Land Use Act, the Biofuels Act, the Intellectual Property Code and the Climate Change Act.
4. Repeal of the Mining Act of 1995 and call on Congress to consider the other proposed bills on mining which truly respect the rights of indigenous peoples to their ancestral lands, territories and resources.
5. Formulate laws, which will translate some of the international agreements signed by the Philippine Government into national laws.
6. Support for the campaign against the vilification and labeling of IP leaders, activists and organizations as communist fronts.

Simultaneous with the lobbying in Congress was a mass action of some one hundred indigenous peoples Mendiola, with their traditional attires, banners and placards shouting and chanting for their demands for the respect of their rights as indigenous peoples. "There is no significant change on the lives of Indigenous Peoples under the Aquino regime!" This was the chant of the people joining the rally who expressed their frustration at the actual conditions in their communities, which have been subjected to development aggression and militarization under the Aquino regime.

At the Mendiola march-rally, Cordillera Elders Alliance (CEA) Deputy Secretary General said that indigenous peoples in the Cordillera, alongside other indigenous communities, continue to be threatened with development aggression. "Kami sa Kordilyera ay patuloy na nahaharap sa mga dambuhalang korporasyon ng pagmimina at dam na siyang sumisira sa aming kalikasan at mga katutubong pamayanan. Kaakibat nito ang patuloy at papatinding militarisasyon sa aming mga pamayanan na nagbubunga ng mga paglabag sa aming mga karapatang pantao" (Indigenous peoples of the Cordillera are continually confronted with large scale mining operations and mega dams, which destroy our environment and our ancestral lands. This is alongside intensified militarization of our communities that results to further human rights violations).

On the same day, the HOR was afire with the questions, complaints and statements of the indigenous peoples during the dialogue with the NCIP Commissioners and bureau directors. The indigenous peoples were also guests in the regular plenary session of the House of Representatives, where privilege speeches tackling IP concerns and issues were delivered by some of the IP legislators and advocates in congress. Among those who delivered their privilege speeches were Rep. Teddy Baguilat, Rep. Luz Ilagan, Rep. Maximo Dalog, Rep. Bernardo Vergara, Rep. Nancy Catamco, Rep. Arlene Bag-ao and Rep. Teddy Casiño.

"It was a fruitful and inspiring experience for the indigenous delegates who were able to express their issues and concerns to those mandated to serve and protect them, and ensure the respect of indigenous peoples' collective rights", said CPA Vice Chairperson for External Affairs Jill Cariño, adding that the issues and challenges must be seriously taken and addressed by the legislators.#