Declaration of Commitment on the Occasions of the 25th Anniversary of AIPP and the 10th Anniversary of the UNDRIP

“Reaffirming our roots, Embracing our future”

Having established the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) in 1992 to uphold, promote, and exercise the inherent right to self-determination of indigenous peoples, to respond to political, social, and economic domination, oppression, and exploitation, imposition of alien culture and legal systems; as a forum to build solidarity and unity, facilitate sharing of experiences and ideas toward common aspirations; and to reach out to other marginalised and oppressed peoples, groups, and the international community for equality, justice and peace,

Guided by these, over the last 25 years, we have come together and organised ourselves to discuss, propagate, and assert our own agenda toward our inherent right to self-determination and self-government; human rights and customary law; our right over our lands, territories and resources; culture, science, and intellectual property; and rights of our women, children, youth, elders, and persons with disabilities,

Recognising that the historic adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) on 13th September 2007 has provided momentous opportunities in promoting and protecting, and in enlarging and advancing international customary legal recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples around the world,

Recognising that we have made great strides in our endeavour, and yet existing and emergent challenges require the continued struggle for our rights, on the occasions of the 25th Anniversary of AIPP and the 10th Anniversary of the UNDRIP, on 9th August 2017, International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples, the member-organisations of AIPP declare:

1. That at the heart of our struggles is the aspiration to realise our right to self-determination through self-government for the free determination of our political status and pursuance of our economic, social and cultural development. We stress that our struggle for self-determination is for democratisation that encompasses universal human rights principles and indigenous worldview. We recommit to work towards strengthening and building institutions that encourages the development and growth of our distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural systems. We also commit to collaborate, cooperate, and work with States and their agencies, international agencies, civil society organisations, and other marginalised groups towards building a democratic society and for equality, justice and peace.

2. That the continuity of our existence through our intrinsic relationship with our lands, territories, and natural resources, and the preservation of our identity through our own language, religion and customs is continually under threat by means such as militarisation, development aggression, displacement, and cultural domination.

We therefore reiterate our resolve in working to reclaim our freedom and rights over our lands, territories, and natural resources, and to ensure our continued custodianship over these according to processes and means that we ourselves will determine according to change in circumstances. We are also determined to undertake every means to safeguard our cultural heritage and transmit our language, religion and customs to future generations.
3. That our traditional institutions and governance systems, which are firmly rooted in our worldview and ethos underpinned by the values of justice, fairness, and inclusiveness, have been greatly weakened by the imposition of state structures and alien legal systems, and the influence of foreign cultures.

We commit ourselves in revitalising our traditional institutions and governance systems, to secure space for their efficient transmission and continuance vis-à-vis, and despite, state structures through developing structures that are meaningful and relevant for us.

4. That much progress has been made in addressing the distinct rights and needs of special sectors within indigenous communities including women, children, youth, elders, persons with disabilities and LGBTI.

We commit ourselves in pushing the momentum to ensure that their distinct needs are addressed.

5. That despite inroads that have been made in empowering and advancing the rights of indigenous women, the crucial roles they play within indigenous communities have not been adequately acknowledged and there continue to be significant challenges in ensuring their equal treatment, particularly in decision-making processes within political spheres.

Recognising the need for urgent action in this regard, we pledge to encourage actions that would contribute toward ensuring the equal rights of indigenous women.

6. That the contemporary challenge of climate change is spurring widespread and unprecedented events spanning borders that potentially threatens peoples’ lives, welfare and world peace. As peoples with intimate symbiotic relationship with the environment, indigenous peoples’ survival is at grave risk. The crisis wrought by climate change implicates moral and political responsibility for the States and their agencies, the international global community, and all peoples to come together.

We therefore commit ourselves to collaborate, cooperate, and work with States and their agencies, international agencies, civil society organisations, and other marginalised groups to develop carefully coordinated solutions, and to compliment and share responsibilities based on a morally coherent worldview.

7. That despite the headway and opportunities provided with the adoption of the UNDRIP, we are concerned that not much progress has been made in achieving the aspirations enshrined in it and that governments in Asia are reluctant to embrace it.

We undertake to explore every opportunity provided by the UNDRIP to engage with institutions, including those of the States, intergovernmental, international and regional agencies and organisations in working toward achieving its aspirations.

Having committed ourselves to the above, we call for greater unity and solidarity among indigenous peoples, civil societies, human rights bodies and institutions, media and other relevant bodies to strengthen support for the cause and aspirations of indigenous peoples.