

Seventeenth UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII17)
Agenda Item 9: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact and Asia Indigenous Peoples Caucus

The UNPFII theme of this year draws a clear linkage between the 2030 Agenda and indigenous peoples' rights, particularly on our right to lands, territories and resources.

We welcome this initiative by the UNPFII17 as it is very timely and relevant to indigenous peoples. We are, however, concerned that the universal pledges to "leave no one behind" and "to reach those furthest behind first" will not be realized unless diligent political efforts are made by governments to address systemic barriers, recognize rights and create an environment for establishing genuine collaboration and partnership with indigenous peoples and CSOs.

The 2030 Agenda and its set of Goals are strongly anchored on the principles of human rights and democracy. Yet, in several countries in Asia, protests by indigenous peoples against large-scale development interventions such as dams, infrastructure development, land concessions and mining, etc. are intensifying. As a result, we have been labelled as anti-development and even as terrorists. For example, the charge against 600 indigenous human right defenders and leaders as terrorists, among them are the current UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz and the former Secretary General of AIPP and former member of the UNPFII, by the government of the Philippines.

We are not anti-development or terrorists. But, we are against development that causes conflicts, displacements, hunger, environmental destruction and climate change, and worsening inequality and human rights violations. Even as we enter the third year of the SDGs, more people are pushed below poverty line by dispossession of their lands and resources and policies favoring big business and unaccountable corporations.

Indigenous peoples' territories are the home to 60% of the world's biodiversity, yet their contribution to sustainability of life on the planet is not recognized, and the rights to their territories is not secured. Further, the small farmers who produce the most food and the workers who have created the greatest wealth are living in stark poverty, and their roles and contributions to development remains unrecognized. Destroying indigenous territories and resources and exploiting labour of poor men and women will not help in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

This year's HLPF theme is "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies". Under this, we must address the systemic barriers that hinders accountable governance and respect and protection of human rights. We must put peoples and nature at the heart of the SDGs, instead of repression and criminalization of peoples' movements, and environment and human rights defenders.

Building resilience must focus on empowering communities that are most vulnerable and marginalized such as: indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, migrants, women, LGBTIQ, elderly and youth, etc. Resilience must mean that the most marginalized and vulnerable groups are able to take control of their development and future.

We urge for partnerships and cooperation that are grounded in the principle of accountability of states, corporations and investors.

Governments should setup mechanisms for communicating a transparent, participatory and inclusive country-level review processes (VNR). Further, governments need to strengthen efforts to publicize their plans and opportunities for participation, sharing common challenges and identifying best practices in right-holders and stakeholder engagement.

To ensure that everyone is counted, governments should invest their efforts in data generation and in developing indicators that are measurable and corresponds to the needs of indigenous peoples to properly reflect their needs and realities. And governments should encourage and welcome data generation by citizens and communities and establish partnership with us, such as with the initiative on Indigenous Navigator.

In conclusion, the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a single overarching vision for the transformation of societies in which no one is left behind. Integrated approaches that focus on the needs of the most vulnerable peoples in rural and urban areas must underpin the actions to achieve transformation of societies.