JOINT STATEMENT ON

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, 9 AUGUST 2022

RECLAIMING OUR POWER

We at Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), Network of Indigenous Women in Asia (NIWA), Indigenous Knowledge and Peoples of Asia (IKPA), Asia Indigenous Youth Platform (AIYP), Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders (IPHRD) and Indigenous Voices of Asia Network (IVAN) have come together in solidarity with all indigenous women in Asia to reclaim our roles in the preservation and transmission of indigenous knowledge.

The Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples noted “Long before the development of modern science, which is quite young, Indigenous Peoples have developed their ways of knowing how to survive and also of ideas about meanings, purposes and values”. And among Indigenous Peoples, women have a crucial role as a holder of scientific and technical knowledge of medicines, herbs and food systems, language, culture, rituals, art and weaving, and conservation of resources.

Indigenous knowledge is crucial in contributing solutions to conflicts through indigenous justice, climate change adaptation/mitigation and preservation of biodiversity; in maintaining indigenous identity and knowledge; achieving goals of sustainable development; and building resilience in the event of disasters and pandemics.
Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge and particularly the knowledge held by indigenous women is based on accumulated observations of local phenomena, often held in oral rather than written forms, and holistic rather than specialist. Therefore, indigenous women, as the preservers and nurturers of indigenous knowledge are the agencies in rebuilding our communities for a sustainable future.

We are proud that indigenous women leadership is growing in strength and through our leadership, Indigenous Peoples’ movement will be strengthened by many-folds.

Our lands and territories are the spaces where our freedom sprang from, and our spirituality and worldviews are closely tied to it. And our very capacity and means to contribute to the national and global issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, food and nutrition, etc. depends on securing and protecting our right to lands, territories and resources. It is for this reason that our women and youths have been in the forefront of protecting our lands and territories as human rights defenders and thousands have lost their lives across the region.

We salute them for their bravery and sacrifices made for our future!

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is an important milestone in recognizing the role of indigenous women in transmitting and enriching our knowledge as well as our right to self-determination. But we are dismayed that these rights are ignored by states and remains on paper only.

We reiterate that our right to self-determination is the pathway to addressing the restoration of our homelands and our agency as sustainers and peace makers of our society. Women are right bearing agents with the power for making transformative change.

While we call on states and societies to recognize rights and role, indigenous sisters in Asia stands united for our waters, forests, lands and self-determination of our peoples. The indigenous knowledge that we possess is our power and we commit to continue our fight for our rights and ensure women’s leadership at all levels for a better future of our sisters, children, families, communities and for the mother Earth and humanity.