



Message by Lawrence Jeff Johnson  
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On the Celebration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People:  
Reaffirming the Indigenous Peoples Development Framework under the  
Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) Through Convergence

Institute of Social Order, Ateneo De Manila University  
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Distinguished Guests and Partners:

- from the indigenous and tribal communities
- from Civil Society and our social partners, Non-Governmental Organizations and the academe,
- Honorable Loren Legarda, House of Senate
- Honorable Agton, Jr. Chairperson, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples
- Honorable Quisumbing, Officer-In-Charge, Commission on Human Rights
- Mr de Liaño, Deputy Coordinator General, Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
- Ms Jacqueline Badcock, UN Resident Coordinator
- Colleges and friends from the United Nations and Donor Agencies,

GOOD MORNING

- Many acknowledge that Indigenous peoples of today are the descendants of the original inhabitants of many lands with unique cultures, religions and patterns of socio-economic structures.
- Essentially, this simple description captures how these peoples are described in the ILO Convention (No. 169) on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- The number of indigenous peoples throughout the world – for whom this celebration is dedicated, is estimated at 300 – 350 million women men and children living in 72 countries.
- At least 5,000 indigenous groups can be distinguished in terms of language, cultural characteristics and geographical location.



### Commemorating the Contributions of the World's Indigenous Peoples

- The proclamation by the UN of August 9 each year as the International Day of the World's Indigenous People is intended to promote and protect the rights of the world's indigenous population.
- It is also meant to recognize the achievements and contributions the group have made and continue to make to improve this world, in a number of areas, including environmental protection.
- Thus, the International Day of the World's Indigenous People should be a celebration of what they contributed and continue to contribute to make this world a better place for everyone.
- People everywhere, often without realizing it, have been influenced by the cultures and achievements of indigenous peoples – through the food on our tables, the words in our languages and the medicines we use daily for everything from headaches to heart disease.
- Indigenous peoples are on the frontlines of the environmental challenge – they have a vital role to play as a leading force for its protection and preservation. For centuries, many in the community have engaged in sustainable land and sea management.
- There are medicines derived from plants discovered within their communities that are developed and passed from generation to generation. Pharmaceutical companies often tap into their knowledge and wisdom however the gains may not have been distributed equally.
- The artworks and cultural artifacts from this communities is often in great demand – however, theft and the unauthorized sale of their items robs them of monetary gains and their cultural heritage. Thus there is a strong need for indigenous peoples to gain greater protection for their intellectual and cultural property.

### The Condition and Concerns of the Indigenous Peoples

- From the perspective of the UN, the proclamation of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People, as well as the Decade of the Indigenous Peoples, are aimed at further strengthening international cooperation for the solution of problems faced in such areas as culture, education, health, human rights, the environment, and economic development.
- The Indigenous communities want to maintain their distinct cultures and transmit their heritage to subsequent generations.



Thus, they deserve the right to elect to educate their children in their own languages, with their own textbooks and school materials.

- Among some of the continuing concern indigenous peoples are facing are:
  - land and resources, human rights, self-government
  - self-development, environment, discrimination
  - basic social services, health, education, language
  - cultural integrity and intellectual property rights
- To help address these concerns, the indigenous peoples themselves have been seeking justice at both the nationally and internationally levels for many years.
- Many Indigenous organizations are making use of the United Nations complaints procedures for human rights violations. For example, a procedure established by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) enables indigenous groups to voice their concerns before the United Nations and to appeal for redress.
- The UN and its Specialized Agencies within the Philippines has organized the UN Inter-Agency Technical Working Group on Indigenous Peoples in order to support the UN Country Team members to effectively pursue common objectives on the promotion and protection of indigenous peoples' rights.
- The activities of the UN Inter Agency Technical Working Group on Indigenous Peoples focus on three key result areas:
  - (1) Strengthening the Institutional Capacities of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, UN and Indigenous People's Organizations;
  - (2) Full Implementation of the Indigenous People's Rights Act;
  - (3) Ratification of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989/ ILO Convention No. 169<sup>1</sup> and popularization of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples<sup>2</sup>.
- I'd like to therefore take this opportunity to say something about ILO Convention 169, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention which was adopted in 1989. Convention 169 is an international treaty that is currently in force that deals exclusively with the rights of indigenous peoples. The Convention **requires** ratification by a State to bind itself to apply the provisions of this Convention. Philippines has not yet ratified the convention and we would like to encourage

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<sup>1</sup> *ILO Convention No. 169 is a legally-binding international instrument for the protection of IP rights that requires ratification by each member states of the ILO. Philippines has not ratified the convention to date.*

<sup>2</sup> *The UN Declaration was adopted with 144 States voting in favour, 4 voting against (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) and 11 abstentions (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Samoa and Ukraine) on 13 September 2007.*



relevant partners and advocates to take ownership in promoting the ratification of this Convention.

### Indigenous Peoples' Development in the Philippines

- The 1987 Philippine Constitution has provisions responding to the long standing development concerns of the indigenous peoples in the country.
- The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act or Republic Act 8371, a landmark piece of legislation, is an enabling act for this Constitutional mandate. It provides the indigenous peoples a workable legal anchor for the protection of their rights and a framework for the service providers.
- The Indigenous Peoples Master Plan, which is to be presented today, will hopefully make the indigenous peoples more visible in the national development map. This Master Plan could serve as a basis for the incorporation of indigenous peoples' development concerns in the Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP).
- Because of its importance, the ILO has provided support for the formulation of the Indigenous Peoples' Master Plan, under the Indigenous Peoples Development Programme in Caraga region in Mindanao.
- We encourage all of you to contribute to the implementation of the Indigenous Peoples' Master Plan. In so doing, you can help ensure more coherence and greater impact of development work at the community level.
- In closing, let me say, it is heartening to see all of you coming out here to celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous People. Being here shows your support and advocacy for indigenous peoples' development.
- I wish all of you the best and thank you again for your support. Have a good day.