



ICPD Preparatory Committee, second session - 10-21 May 1993

THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT SECOND
SESSION - 10-21 MAY 1993

STATEMENT FROM THE ASIA INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S NETWORK
(AIWN) AND THE CORDILLERA PEOPLES' ALLIANCE (CPA)

In behalf of indigenous peoples from Asia-Pacific and other regions I would like to extend our congratulations to you for being elected as the Chair. I am Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, an indigenous woman from the Philippines. I am the Convenor of the Asia Indigenous Women's Network, and the Chairperson of the Cordillera Peoples' Alliance. I will speak in behalf of these organizations and the few indigenous peoples' participating here.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to bring across our concerns and proposals. Madame Secretary-General Nafis Sadik reminded us in her opening statement that 1993 is the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. One objective of the year is to increase public awareness and knowledge about our situation which hopefully can generate broader understanding and support for our issues and demands.

What this conference desires to achieve in terms of integrating

population with environment and development is the way of life of our peoples for ages. This capacity to balance ecosystems and peoples is recognized in Sections 5.45 to 5.48 and Chapter 26 of Agenda 21. This balance has been maintained because of our peoples' very simple lifestyles and because we regard the earth as a living being which is our partner in sustaining life. We cannot abuse it because by doing so we are abusing ourselves. Partnership and sharing, not dominance and accumulation, underpins our relationship with the earth, among ourselves, and with other peoples.

Colonization and the imposition of a dominating, wasteful, and accumulative development model, however, has led to the destruction of our way of life and our sustainable societies. The management of our resources and populations has been taken out of our hands. We have been deprived of our ancestral territories through decrees and with the use of force.

Our lands which are usually sparsely populated but very rich in natural resources are targets for population redistribution schemes. Such transmigration programmes are also intended to forcibly assimilate us into the dominant society. The biodiversity and cultural diversity which is found in our lands and among us are being destroyed.

Provision of health and other social services is sadly inadequate and yet our women found themselves subjected to coercive and undemocratic methods of fertility control. Our traditional family planning and health practices are discarded in favour of western technology which we were told are superior. Our resistance to the

expropriation of our lands and the destruction of our way of life has been met with aggressive militarization. Bombings, massacres, gang rape of our women, disappearances, etc., are stories which we hear everyday. Many of our peoples are refugees within and outside our own countries.

This explains why population trends among indigenous peoples' do not always follow the national trend. In developing countries, the national population boom is not necessarily reflected among indigenous peoples. Child survival is difficult and maternal and infant mortality rates are higher than the national average. On the other hand, those found in developed countries have increasing populations in contrast to the almost zero growth among the dominant population. These population trends happen amidst a common situation in which land and natural resources are becoming more scarce.

PROPOSALS FOR THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND PROGRAM OF ACTION

But then, again, we are not here to talk about our problems. We are here to present proposals which we hope can be considered by this respectable body. The affirmation of our peoples' capacity in integrating population, development and environment is not enough. Such capacity has been diminished and is seriously threatened. In this light, our proposals for the conceptual framework are the following;

1. PART ONE. ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES

We agree with all the principles outlined in the draft. In addition to these principles, this section should affirm and

offer positive action in terms of reinforcing the capacity of indigenous peoples to maintain population balance and ecological sustainability. The inextricable linkage between the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples to their ancestral lands and sustainable population management, should be highlighted.

The collective rights of indigenous peoples' should also be respected and recognized as well as individual rights and responsibilities. These rights are rights to ancestral domain, right to be protected from ethnocide and genocide, right to practice and develop indigenous social and political structures and laws, right to develop and promote indigenous knowledge and worldview, etc. These collective rights should be part of human rights.

2. PART TWO. CHOICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CHAPTER 1. INTEGRATING POPULATION CONCERNS INTO DEVELOPMENT

This section should reiterate the points raised earlier. In addition to this, action in terms of legislations which will recognize rights of indigenous peoples to their ancestral territories should be made. This will include allowing the peoples to demarcate these traditional territories and allowing them to practice their own systems of land tenure and sustainable use of resources. The land question remains a key issue as far as population is concerned.

3. CHAPTER 11 - ROLE AND STATUS OF WOMEN

The empowerment of indigenous women is a crucial factor in maintaining population balance. However, forced sterilization and inadequate and inappropriate health and family planning services, has contributed in disempowering our women. Patriarchal aspects of our own culture and tradition has likewise contributed to this. Therefore, indigenous women's empowerment which means enabling them to have control over their own fertility, their land and their resources, should be integral in any population program. This will also include the need to integrate them in decision-making bodies in all levels and forms.

4. CHAPTER V111 - POPULATION DISTRIBUTION AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

This section should address problems brought about by official, large-scale population transfer schemes which is a factor in the destruction of indigenous peoples' lands and ways of life. Indigenous peoples' regions and ecosystems which they have managed sustainably for centuries should not be used as escape valves for the population crisis in other regions.

This should also address indigenous peoples who have been pushed away from their ancestral lands because of "development" programs and who become refugees because of militarization. For the later, they should be given refugee status and be accorded the necessary services. The goal is to return these populations as soon as possible to their ancestral lands.

5. CHAPTER X - TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH

The traditional knowledge and practice of indigenous peoples in

relation to health and family planning, should be reinforced insofar as these promote women's control over their own bodies. Protection and promotion of this knowledge should be facilitated. Indigenous people should be provided control over research, dissemination and practice of this knowledge.

Technology which is destructive of women's bodies and which further alienate indigenous peoples from their traditional scientific knowledge should not be promoted. Guidelines for monitoring the imposition and transfer of such technology should be part of the agenda.

Oppressive conditionalities tied up with financial assistance for development and population programs should be removed. Structural adjustment programs which reduce budgets for basic social services and increase debt servicing should be reviewed and renegotiated. Thorough consultations with indigenous peoples should be done before any development or population program is conceptualized and brought into their communities.

6. SUPPORTING A WORKABLE PARTNERSHIP

Partnership with indigenous peoples can work out only if indigenous peoples' perspectives are solicited and seriously considered in the agenda of the conference. We therefore recommend that an experts meeting on "Indigenous Peoples' Perspectives on Population and Development" be convened. This will be participated in by indigenous peoples and government, and representatives from UN agencies, like UNFPA, ILO, UNDP, UNWGIP, etc.

If such a meeting cannot be done, inputs from indigenous peoples which spell out these perspectives should be requested and this will form part of the reference materials for the conference.

Mechanisms should be provided to ensure that the impact of population and development programs on indigenous peoples will be monitored. The specific effect of programs on indigenous women should be documented and be used as a basis for the formulation of new programs.

7. FOLLOW-UP TO THE CONFERENCE

A focal point for indigenous peoples should be created which will ensure that discussions and the agenda which the conference has come up with will be disseminated. This focal point can be composed of an aggrupation of indigenous peoples' organizations representatives who have been involved in the whole process.

The evaluation of how the conference proposals are implemented in so far as it has affected indigenous peoples' populations will be done through conferences convened for this purpose.

CONCLUSION

Finally, I would like to reiterate our position that the conceptual framework will only be relevant to indigenous peoples if it addresses these 4 basic points;

1. The inequity between the north and south which is reflected in the racist, sexist and class and eugenist bias of population and

development programs.

2. The unsustainable patterns of production and consumption which is a key factor in the displacement of indigenous peoples from their lands and the destruction of the ecological stability.

3. The discrimination and oppression of indigenous peoples which have been institutionalized in laws and even in structures of governance.

4. The respect for indigenous culture, spirituality, lifestyles and sustainable development development models and the promotion of and development of cultural and biodiversity.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and we are looking forward to the presentation of a resolution from the delegates on our behalf.

17 May 1993

For further information, please contact: popin@undp.org
POPIN Gopher site: <gopher://gopher.undp.org/11/ungophers/popin>
POPIN WWW site: <http://www.undp.org/popin>