

TEBTEBBA (Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education) Statement at the Contact Group of the AWG-LCA on Mitigation

April 8, 2009

Thank you Mr. Chairman for giving me the floor to speak on behalf of indigenous peoples at this Contact Group session on Mitigation.

Last week and in earlier interventions we spoke on this same issue and reiterated that in undertaking mitigation measures there should be a recognition of the historical and present contributions of indigenous peoples in mitigating climate change. We are referring here to our continuing practice of low-carbon and neutral - carbon lifestyles and traditional livelihoods. We are the ones who have protected our forests from rampant deforestation and prevented the oil, gas and coal in our territories from being extracted even at the cost of life and limb. On this basis we can confidently say that we contributed millions of gigatons of carbon from being emitted into the atmosphere. It is therefore important that our past, present and future contributions to mitigation should be recognized and we should be provided better incentives to enhance our capacities to further contribute to mitigation.

This recognition can come in the form of amending national policies and laws to recognise our rights as contained in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to implement this international instrument of which 144 Parties to this Convention have voted for. It can also include technical and funding assistance for capacity building and to replicate and upscale our efforts which are already contributing to mitigation.

We also raised our concern over the actual and potential threats to our human rights because of mitigation measures being undertaken under the Kyoto Protocol. As the concurrent Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, I had the privilege to make and submit a report on the impacts of mitigation measures on climate change on the human rights and lands, territories and resources of indigenous peoples at the 7th Session of the UNPFII. I have submitted this report to the Secretariat and I hope this has entered its data base.

This report contained many cases of how indigenous peoples human rights have been violated because of mitigation measures which include expansion of monoculture plantations of oil palm, jatropha, among others, for biodiesel which has caused expropriation of indigenous peoples' lands. The significant increase of mega hydroelectric power plants are also causing displacement of indigenous peoples from their lands without their free, prior and informed consent. These are just few of the examples cited in the report.

Now, with REDD looming in the horizon, we see threats as well as opportunities. We see this as an opportunity to call anew for the respect of our rights to our forests and the resources found therein, and to strengthen our traditional forest management and conservation practices. But if our rights are glossed over and undermined in the bid to include forests in developing countries as part of mitigation measures then we see serious threats to the future survival of forest dwelling indigenous peoples' and their cultures.

Indigenous peoples consider mitigation not only as a technical issue but also as a social and environmental justice issue. Those who contributed the most to mitigation measures because of their sustainable consumption and production patterns should be provided incentives and those who have contributed the most to emissions should take up greater burdens and responsibilities. The historical environmental debt of those who have caused this problem has to be paid. Thus, the call for the provision of finance and technology, as well as the imperative of respecting the rights of

indigenous peoples and the right to development are the appropriate actions to take to address social and environmental injustice.

During the 8th session of the UNPFII which will be held this May, we will also submit a report on the local mitigation and adaptation measures of indigenous peoples. We will submit this to the UNFCCC Secretariat after this has been officially presented at the session.

It is in this light that I take this opportunity to appeal to all the Parties to ensure that any paragraph in the final Copenhagen agreement on REDD should include a reference to the need to respect the rights of indigenous peoples and other forest dwelling people and that our free, prior and informed consent be obtained before our forests are included in the implementation of REDD.

We further call on the Parties to include mitigation measures of indigenous peoples in the monitoring, reporting and verification processes in undertaking NAMA. Mechanisms to include indigenous peoples in MRV processes should be put in place to ensure that our contributions are counted and appropriately rewarded. We just finished the Asia, Africa and Latin American Indigenous Peoples' Summits on Climate Change and in these summits we heard numerous stories of the present efforts indigenous peoples are doing to mitigate climate change. These include the establishment of locally controlled small-scale renewable energy projects, continuing practice of traditional agriculture and agroforestry livelihoods and use of our traditional knowledge related to mitigation. There is a strong request for additional support from the developed countries for these efforts to be enhanced and replicated in other places and countries.

We fully support the call of some Parties that developed countries take the lead in the global mitigation effort. We support their view that NAMAs should be implemented in accordance with the Convention and to support sustainable development and poverty eradication and ,may I add, the respect of human rights as contained in International Human Rights Law.

Finally, Mr. Chairperson we recommend that a technical briefing or an expert workshop on indigenous peoples and climate change be held within the year so that our issues and contributions to mitigation and adaptation be discussed further.

Thank you very much Mr. Chairperson.

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