

Distr.  
GENERAL

A/CONF.157/PC/42/Add.12  
3 June 1993

Original: ENGLISH

WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Preparatory Committee  
Fourth session  
Geneva, 19 April-7 May 1993  
Agenda item 6

REPORT ON OTHER MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Report by the Secretariat

Addendum

Contribution submitted by the Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact

1. The attention of the Preparatory Committee is drawn to the attached contribution by the Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact, an umbrella organization for indigenous peoples in the region, which organized the Asian Conference on the Rights of Indigenous/Tribal Peoples in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 18 to 23 May 1993. A total of 74 people from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines and Thailand participated in the meeting.

2. The Asian Conference was the first occasion on which the indigenous peoples of the region had come together. Although there are an estimated 200 million indigenous people in the region, there is no non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council to represent them at United Nations meetings. The Declaration represents their perspective on the rights of indigenous/tribal peoples which they requested be considered by the World Conference.

## DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF ASIAN INDIGENOUS/TRIBAL PEOPLES

### THREATS TO OUR EXISTENCE

Our existence is threatened by systematic campaigns of extermination - development aggression, population transfers, forced assimilation, invasions, occupations and militarization.

At this point in history there is an all-round attack on our existence from the dominant societies often in collaboration with the international forces.

Issues and concerns of indigenous peoples can no longer be ignored, isolated or suppressed; they are an integral part of the national and international political agenda and have to be understood and addressed at that level.

Development aggression involves the encroachment onto our lands for logging, mining, hydroelectric dams, geothermal and nuclear energy projects, including nuclear waste dumping, national parks, industrial zones, agribusiness projects and tourism.

As the traditional custodians of the regions' rainforests, land, water and the resources therein, which are being exploited ruthlessly by commercial firms causing extensive damage to the environment, we assert that our relationship with nature is sustainable and that there is much that the world can benefit from our experience in the management of nature for a sustainable future; we therefore make this declaration.

### WE ARE OF THE LAND

We Asian indigenous peoples know who we are. We are the descendants of the original inhabitants of territories which have been conquered, and we consider ourselves distinct from the rest of the prevailing society. We have our own languages, religions, customs and world view and we are determined to transmit these to future generations. We do not have centralized political institutions but organized instead at the level of the community and have highly developed methods for arriving at decisions by consensus.

Asian indigenous people represent a variety of cultures and histories. We share in common a struggle to be free from Western or Japanese colonialism in the last centuries and more recently a struggle to be free from forms of Asian colonialism. The decolonization of Asia from European powers is the fruit of our momentous struggles. But we were wrong to think that colonialism was and is a Western product only. We indigenous people have experienced during this century the worst forms of colonialism from fellow Asians. It continues to be perpetrated by Asians. Therefore, justice, equality and liberty demand that the process of decolonization must be completed.

Asian colonialists have joined hands with previous colonizers to recolonize us in the name of "nation-building" and "development" and to deprive us of our rights to self-determination. We are being pushed to extinction not only through invasion, planned population transfers and

transmigration of other peoples to our territories but also through the efforts of dominant Asians to assimilate us, to impose languages, religions and political concepts which are alien to us.

We are aware that our societies are far from ideal and reflect inequalities in many relationships as between young and old and between sexes. But these inequalities are nothing compared to the inequalities imposed on us by neo-colonizers. The struggle for women's rights in our communities is an integral part of our struggle for self-determination.

In the Asian subcontinent and to a lesser extent in other Asian countries, many people suffer from the evils of casteism and like beliefs, which in practice nullify, diminish or impair the equal recognition, enjoyment and exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the areas of political, economic, social, cultural or any other sphere of public life. We therefore recognize and declare casteism as a form of racism.

#### WHAT WE MEAN BY "SELF-DETERMINATION"

We assert that we know what self-determining communities are. We demand that all recognize that we have always been self-determining.

We assert the right to our identities which are linked to our territories and ancestral domain. We assert our right to the full control of our lands as the foundation of our existence, our customary laws and indigenous social systems.

We assert the right to use, manage and develop all natural resources found within our ancestral domain.

We assert the right to control our economies and to develop according to our beliefs and practices.

We assert the right to revitalize our traditional institutions, to speak our languages, to live according to our world view and to educate our children in these.

We assert the right to determine the form of self-government, the right to uphold indigenous political systems, the right to engage in foreign relations and trade, and the right to form alliances and federations with other indigenous peoples for ushering in a life of peace and security and for pursuing our common goal.

We assert the right to preserve, develop and protect human resources from commercial and scientific exploitation and to protect our systems of knowledge and our cultural and intellectual property rights.

We assert the right to be recognized as citizens of the States of our choice.

We assert the right to free passage through boundaries imposed by States which divide our territories.

We assert the right of refugees forced out of our territories to return to our territories and to reoccupy our lands under appropriate safeguards.

Where indigenous peoples live in territories not their own and live in minority situations, we assert the right to equal protection of the law and to safeguards against minority discrimination and oppression.

We assert the right to defend ourselves when our rights to self-determination are violated or are not recognized.

#### STRATEGIES FOR EMPOWERMENT

The globalization of the economic, social and political orders as manifested in the enlarging role of transnational corporations in investments and trade, in the greater role of multilateral aid institutions in determining economic and fiscal policies of many developing countries, in the emergence of a unipolar world military power, and in the emergence of new information technologies create opportunities and dangers for indigenous peoples' movements for self-determination.

Increasingly, developing economies are responding to the trade stimuli promoted by transnational/regional trading blocs leading to loss of control over their own markets. Thus weakened States may respond more positively to our rights or may intensify their attack on our societies.

Keeping this in mind, we assert our role as the prime movers of our own history and destiny, and we resist any attempt to be appropriated/represented by Government, non-governmental or religious organizations without our consent.

We resist any attempt to be appropriated or represented by government agencies, non-governmental organizations and religious organizations without our consent or knowledge.

We stress the primary importance of strengthening community initiatives through education, organization and empowerment. We also stress the importance of the support from the democratically oriented sections of other societies for the success of our struggles for self-determination. The dismantling of the recorded history, which is racist, and the documentation of our oral history is recognized as a fundamental step for liberating human society from the colonial mind-set. This will contribute to the creation of an atmosphere where the indigenous peoples' movement and others' movements can unite for a new social order - building sustainable society.

We will strive to create national and regional alliances and/or form indigenous peoples' organizations to promote our concerns through legislation at the local, national and international levels.

We extend our hands and hearts to work together with the other indigenous peoples' movements in other regions of the world for sustainable development. We recognize as our natural allies the social movement of women, environmental groups and the movement for the equality of all races.

We shall submit this Declaration to the United Nations and other international bodies and agencies and to Governments. More importantly, we will bring this Declaration to our peoples to serve as a framework for continuing actions that link local to national initiatives with indigenous peoples' movements in other parts of the world.

18-23 May 1993  
Chiang Mai, Thailand

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