MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY FOR CORDILLERA DAY 2015

The Philippine Task Force for Indigenous Peoples’ Rights (TFIP) extends its warmest greetings of solidarity and congratulations to the Cordillera Peoples’ Alliance for this year’s celebration of Cordillera Day. We likewise congratulate all the host provincial and community organizations in the different celebrations of this decentralized event.

The Cordillera people, like other indigenous peoples in the Philippines, have suffered due to the lack of action and attention to their plight by the Aquino presidency. The Indigenous Peoples’ Agenda given to the president when he assumed office in 2010 fell on deaf ears and blinded eyes. The ancestral lands of the Cordillera people are continually threatened by mining applications and operations of big transnational corporations. Dams and other energy projects like the geothermal energy project in Kalinga still continue to haunt indigenous communities who fought against the aggression of dam builders in the not so distant past.

The President is indeed accountable for exploiting the rich ancestral lands in the Cordillera region as a resource base for foreign industries, further depriving the Igorot people of the right to self-determination to use the land and resources for the genuine development of their communities. The President’s executive order (EO79) supposedly institutionalizing reforms in the mining sector does nothing to change the orientation of the mining industry. It is a great disappointment for the numerous indigenous and other anti-large-scale mining groups calling for the repeal of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 and for the enactment of a new mining law that will impose strict environmental and human rights standards and protect the national interests of the Filipino people.

President Aquino must also be held accountable for the numerous human rights violations and killings against indigenous activists who are guilty of no crime but to defend their rights to the land for the enjoyment of future generations. Justice is yet to be served for the killings of the Ligiw family and William Bugatti by state security forces. The continuing political vilification of leaders and members of indigenous peoples’ organizations as enemies of the state is alarming. Leaders and supporters of indigenous peoples in Ifugao, including Brandon Lee, an American married to an Ifugao woman, have been subjected to threats, rumor-mongering, public humiliation, harassment and attacks even in the social media. We condemn all of these acts and support the stance and positions taken by the Cordillera Peoples’ Alliance against mining, dams, energy projects, militarization and human rights violations.
The celebrations of Cordillera Day every year are momentous occasions for the Cordillera Peoples’ Alliance, its members, indigenous communities and supporters to gather and launch stronger and more militant collective actions. It is an opportunity to harness the support of advocates from all over the country for the Cordillera people’s struggle to defend their land, life and resources. It provides a venue for meaningful exchange and building solidarity among different indigenous and like-minded organizations in the Philippines and around the world.

It is a challenge to continue the fighting tradition of Macliing Dulag and other Cordillera heroes and martyrs, who valiantly fought for the ancestral domain and self-determination within the framework of genuine freedom and democracy. The young indigenous peoples of the Cordillera must carry on this challenge.

Long Live the Cordillera Peoples’ Alliance! Long live the Cordillera people!