Statement Urging the Philippine Government to
Uphold Indigenous Peoples Rights during the Upcoming
United Nations World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) 2014

The Philippine Task Force for Indigenous Peoples’ Rights (TFIP) is closely monitoring the process leading
to the upcoming World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), a high-level meeting of the world’s
leaders to be held on September 22-23, 2014 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. We
welcome this move of the United Nations to provide a venue for all countries to come together and
agree on an Outcome Document that will contain action points and recommendations for the
implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This is an
important opportunity for indigenous peoples in the Philippines and around the world to once again
raise our voices and urge governments to fulfill their commitments to recognize, respect and promote
the rights of indigenous peoples as enshrined in the Declaration.

However, we are deeply concerned that the marginalized situation of indigenous peoples in the
Philippines has even worsened, now, seven years since the adoption of the UN Declaration in 2007 and
despite the existence of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA). During the early months of President
Benigno Aquino’s administration, a large number of indigenous peoples’ organizations and advocates in
the Philippines crafted an agenda, which we submitted to the government, proposing solutions to
address the age-old problems of indigenous peoples. Among the urgent issues raised in the Indigenous
Peoples’ Agenda were: ineffectiveness of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP),
anomalies in the recognition of ancestral lands and domains, violation of Free Prior and Informed
Consent (FPIC), gross neglect of basic social services for indigenous peoples, peace issues affecting
indigenous peoples, human rights violations, encroachment of mining companies and other
development projects on indigenous peoples lands, among others. Yet, until today, the Aquino
administration has made no substantial nor favorable response to the cries of indigenous peoples as
stipulated in our agenda. In fact, even more indigenous peoples have become victims of human rights
violations and have been denied their rights to land, life and resources by corporate and state interests.

We reiterate the calls contained in the IP Agenda updated in August 2013. National laws affecting
indigenous peoples must be reviewed and revised to respect indigenous peoples’ rights. In the case of
the Philippine Mining Act of 1995, this must be repealed and replaced by a people’s mining law that is
patriotic and protective of indigenous peoples and the environment. Recognition of the right to
ancestral domain and self-determination must be the framework in planning and carrying out development projects in indigenous territories. Projects without proper FPIC, or FPIC not obtained according to indigenous peoples’ customary laws and interests must be nullified and cancelled. The national budget must ensure significant allocations to alleviate the poverty and neglect of indigenous peoples through the provision of basic services and infrastructure. Indigenous knowledge and other cultural expressions must be recognized, protected and promoted as important for the national cultural heritage and as a contribution to the scientific, technological and artistic advancement of the nation.

The TFIP, along with indigenous peoples’ organizations and communities, challenge the Philippine government to fulfill its mandate and duties as provided for in the constitution and in keeping with the spirit of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act. Likewise, we challenge the Aquino government to fulfill its obligations as a signatory to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We urge the Philippine government to stand up for the interest of its indigenous constituents. The upcoming WCIP high-level meeting is an opportunity for the government to prove that it is willing to listen to indigenous peoples and to act for the realization of justice and recognition of our rights to land and self-determination. The government must take concrete steps to respond favorably to the indigenous peoples agenda and to report truthfully, both to the Filipino people and to the United Nations WCIP meeting, what it has or has not done.

We also recommend that more consultations with indigenous peoples be conducted by relevant government agencies at the local and national levels in order to ensure that the concerns of Philippine indigenous peoples are reflected in the WCIP outcome document. #