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Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)

Interactive Dialogue 5: Building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions

We are around 5'000 distinct indigenous peoples from all regions of the world. We nourish the forests, deserts, rivers and fields that form part of our culture. Our traditional knowledge is built through centuries of symbiotic interaction and co-dependence with our natural environment. We are governed by our customary institutions that provide for social cohesion, cooperation and collective resilience; access to justice; sustainable resource management systems for the common good, and; solidarity relations with other peoples. We are self-governing peoples and rights-holders, and our institutions uphold sustainable development.

“Why then are we being evicted to give way to hydro-power dams, to mono-plantations and extractive industries? These destroy our lands, villages, livelihoods, sacred sites and our customary institutions and our wellbeing. This is the question of thousands of indigenous peoples who continue to be discriminated and marginalized as an effect of the economic growth in many states.

We are not against development. We are in fact the embodiment of sustainable development, but we are threatened by development targets - such as those on energy and climate change solutions - if our human rights are not protected.

Inclusive institutions for achieving the SDGs for us mean the recognition and respect for our customary institutions and our sustainable resource management systems. It means mechanisms that require our free prior and informed consent to development projects and programmes that affect us.

It means inclusive partnership based on the respect for our self-determined development. Universal access to justice means ensuring the effective protection of our collective rights against land grabbing, displacements and destruction of our cultural heritage by states, corporations, investors and business enterprises. It means going beyond social or environmental safeguards to fully ensure respect for human rights, equitable benefit sharing and accountability.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) did not overcome the discrimination against indigenous peoples. If we should not again be left behind, we need concrete actions.

Hence, this is the time for states to show the political will and take concrete actions to abide by and implement their international obligations and commitments to indigenous peoples under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, which took place last year. These commitments

require institutions and mechanisms for the effective participation of indigenous peoples and in decision-making at all levels, institutional reforms and mechanisms of enforcement, as well as special measures for our economic, political and social empowerment. We, as indigenous peoples extend our cooperation in developing the needed partnerships on the basis of equality, equity, cultural diversity, non-discrimination and respect for human rights. Thank you.