

## The World Summit of Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan (Activity Report )

### A. Background

Last April 11 to 17, Ms. Raquel Palma Gil and Nestor Horfilla attended the World Summit on Indigenous Peoples which was successfully organized by the Taiwan Indigenous Cultural Enterprise Development Association in cooperation with the Democratic Pacific Union and the Indigenous Peoples Bureau, Taipei County.

The Taipei Summit was convened to raise urgent issues and concerns affecting the Indigenous Peoples, most specially the climate change and the rapid pace of globalization and the impact on diverse indigenous peoples and cultures. However, the Summit emphasized that there is a need to appreciate the wisdom of the indigenous, as quoted below:

“... The cultures of indigenous people are rich. They are a product of the earth and a treasure of humanity. With the industrial revolution of the last few two hundred years, humanity has brought the whole world face to face with the calamities of global warming and environmental destruction – results which reflect poorly on the accomplishments of modern man. Let us learn from the caring disposition of indigenous people, their sense of stewardship for the earth and their natural spirit...” (Statement of the Summit)

More than 150 participants attended the Summit - indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Peoples from Taiwan, the Philippines, the United States and North America as well as government officials and representatives from indigenous related organizations. The diverse activities and venues of the Summit allowed participants to exchange ideas and crafts in various settings as the Summit progressed through press conference, performance, conference, an evening of dance performance and a three-day visit to indigenous villages.

### B. Country Representation

There were a dozen of Filipino participants, from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, who attended the summit representing their institutional affiliations, namely: the Mangyan Heritage Center, the Non-Timber Forest Products – Task Force, the Ta Glibon Ini Lady Art Collective and the Kalinawa Art Foundation, which supported the travel of Ms. Palma Gil and Mr. Horfilla.

They have actively shared their experiences (and products) during the conference and workshops as well as participated in the community tours and cultural interactions.

## C. Structures and Venues for the Exchange and Discussions

As mentioned, there were varied activities lined-up by the Summit organizers for foreign and local participants, which started with Museum Tour and Press Conference on August 12 and ended with Community Visit and Eco-Tourism Tour in Southern regions of Formosa from August 15 to 17.

However, the highlight of the Summit was the one-day Conference that offered a condensed line-up of presentations addressing the Summit themes, which were summarized in the Summit official document as follows:

### a) Indigenous environmental wisdom and protection of the earth's environment

Most people sense that the world's environment is threatened but feel at a loss as to how to solve the current crises. Traditional indigenous lifestyles emphasize a harmonious relationship with nature. As those traditions have been allowed to fall by the wayside, the environment has suffered. How can traditional indigenous wisdom be applied to heal and protect the earth's environment? How can indigenous knowledge of nature be used to bring about a sustainable world?

### b) Indigenous belief systems today

Increasing contact with the outside world and organized religions has resulted in the disappearance of some traditional beliefs, practices and ceremonies. However, in recent times, a "revival" of some traditional beliefs and ceremonies has been taking place, but not necessarily at the complete exclusion of other religious practices. What is the state of indigenous belief systems today around the world and what is the effect of their revival on the efforts to preserve traditional indigenous culture?

### c) Developing indigenous enterprise

Around the world, indigenous peoples are experimenting with enterprise. These include cultural enterprises such as music, performances and handicrafts. With them have come issues such as determining effective marketing strategies and developing certification systems. Tourism businesses are also increasing among indigenous groups, ranging from cultural tours to modern casinos. How can indigenous cultures engage the world economy while maintaining their cultural identity and preserving the environment?

#### c.1 Country Sharing during the Plenary Session:

The formal conference hosted several speakers who deliberated a variety of sub-topics.

Mr. Horfilla presented a power point presentation on the topic “Community Initiatives in Managing the Indigenous Natural and Cultural Resources: the experience of the Subanen in Lakewood, Zamboanga del Sur” in relation to the first theme of the Summit. He expounded on a particular IP community experience on how a local IP community addressed conflicts in resource-use and resource-access by agreeing to collectively engaged in documenting indigenous knowledge on ethno-botany and advancing community-based environmental conservation measures. Moreover, his sharing explained that a culture-focused strategy was used by the IP community organization, in consonance to their customary laws and to ensure the successful implementation of the community project.

On the other hand, Ms. Palma Gil, in her sharing, narrated the mission and strategic activities of the Kalinawa Art Foundation aimed to support for the Development of Indigenous Peoples’ Visual Artists Sector. She shared the nature, mechanics and focus in organizing IP Visual Arts Exhibitions in the various regions in the Philippines and had emphasized that the key interventions that the Foundation is focused on are designed to facilitate investments along the framework of developing and sustaining “social enterprises” that would address the needs of the IP visual arts sector and eventually of the IP communities as well.

The other Filipino participants also presented papers that narrates their particular programs and experiences in providing support and/or uplifting the quality of life of IP communities in the country.

## c.2 In Small Workshop Groups

On the following day (August 14), the Summit participants there were focused groups discussions on specific sub-themes that the participants themselves have raised and prioritized as urgent. The participants were given the liberty to choose which particular focused-group discussion to join.

The small groups workshops which lasted for half a day, was a venue for deeper discussions on specific topics that a number of participants are mutually interested in. Mr. Horfilla joined the workshop that focused on “Strengthening Indigenous Governance and Administration of Justice”, in which he has highlighted some of his works in IP communities in the Philippines. In that group, the Taiwanese participants also shared their initiatives in reviving their distinct system of Indigenous Governance as they interfaced with the Local Government Units, albeit difficulties and challenges. The discussions had sparked great interests, among the IP participants of Taiwan, on the Mindanao experience.

On the other hand Ms. Palma Gil joined the workshop group that tackled Perm culture, particularly on reviving almost dead rivers and streams. This sub topic was chosen by Ms. Palma Gil for the reason that this is also a concern among Indigenous communities and local settlers in the Philippines whose waterways and water sources have dried up because of ignorance on their preservation and because of abuses on the environment. Suggestions on processes of preservation and revival were given by Ms. Tammy Turner, an advocate of Perm culture. Links to this subject were also emailed by her to the Foundation.

### C.3 Community Interactions in IP Communities

Other engaging events during the summit were the opportunities offered to the participants for informal cross-cultural sharing, which included cultural performances, museum and eco-tourism tours as well as community visits.

An opening Cultural Performance of various IP artists belonging to the different tribes of Formosa dubbed as Soaring Melodies – an Evening of Indigenous Song and Dance.

A three-day tour to Indigenous Peoples' Museums, Local Indigenous Peoples' Schools and Cultural Centers were likewise facilitated. During tea breaks and in between stops of the tour, there were opportunities for Individual - horizontal discussions with other Indigenous People participants.

The Filipino participants also joined the cultural interaction in the local village of the Paiwan Tribe, which was really engaging and inspiring. The interaction with the members of the Paiwan Tribe, hosted by the Elder Chief and a local religious leader, revealed how the tribe has managed to reinvigorate their cultures and traditions amidst the process of interfacing with the influences from outside, particularly the Pentecostal Church. The activity also focused on the initiatives of the young members of the Paiwan community in regenerating their indigenous hunting practices and rituals associated to this cultural life-ways. We have also extended invitations to the community members to visit Mindanao and experience the diverse indigenous community life in the contemporary context.

We however, missed the succeeding community interactions with the Bunun and other tribes because we have to cut short our tour to catch our plane back to Manila.

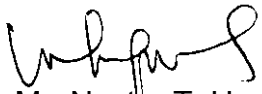
### D. Accounting of Concrete Results:

Perhaps, it would be too early to express what concrete impact of our participation on the Summit. However, we can summarize some of the concrete outputs of our participation. Together we have:

- Promoted our concerns on and works with Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines;
- Enriched our own insights and expanded our knowledge on issues and concerns affecting indigenous peoples, not only in the Philippines but in other countries;
- Raised awareness and interests among some participants to learn from the IP communities in Mindanao;
- Built contacts and linkages to advance further our personal and institutional engagement with IP communities;
- Popularized, the institutional mission of Kalinawa Arts Foundation to support for the development of the IP visual arts sector in the country.

In ending, allow us to express the following concluding statement. Clearly, the Summit identified the aboriginal peoples as “key influences on the future, because, around the world, aboriginal peoples have developed environmental wisdom”. Indeed the discussions and community visits had not only reaffirmed our appreciation on the wisdom of indigenous peoples, but had also strengthened our steadfast commitment to the Summit’ Declaration in calling attention to the cultural heritage of mankind.

Jointly prepared and submitted by the  
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