

## **Indigenous Peoples Continue to Call for the Recognition and Respect of Rights in COP 15 agreement**

Copenhagen, December 7, 2009 (Tebtebba Climate Media Team\*) – More than 200 indigenous peoples coming from various indigenous peoples' organizations and networks around the world met in Copenhagen, Denmark from December 5-6, 2009 to discuss their issues, common positions and strategies on climate change. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 15th Conference of Parties (COP 15) starts today and ends 18th December.

For years, indigenous peoples under the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) - which is the global caucus of indigenous peoples on climate change - has been actively participating in the climate negotiations. Now, it is again leading in forging solid proposals of indigenous peoples to COP 15.

To achieve a common level of understanding among indigenous representatives, an assessment of the status of climate change negotiations leading to Copenhagen was presented. These negotiations, where indigenous peoples actively participated, include the Bonn, Bangkok and Barcelona Climate Talks in 2009. Still, the realization exists that any reference to indigenous peoples' rights could be hardly achieved and must be fought for strongly. Consistently, the Parties or governments who voted against the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) are the same ones which do not want to see any reference to the Declaration in the climate change negotiations texts. These countries include the United States, Canada and Australia.

Among the central concerns deliberated upon is Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation or REDD. REDD is a proposed mitigation action for adoption by the UNFCCC that seeks to prevent release of carbon stored in tropical and sub-tropical forests. While still under negotiation, pilot projects on REDD are already being piloted in several countries, also called REDD countries. Funds have already been set up to fund these pilot projects. These funds include the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and the UN-REDD Programme which is a collaborative programme of the UNEP (UN Environment Programme), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) and UNDP or the UN Development Programme. Northern countries have also set up funds on REDD.

Indigenous representatives from Nepal, Panama, Paraguay, Thailand, Ecuador, Suriname,

Mexico, Peru, Guatemala, and Indonesia gave overviews of the current REDD initiatives undertaken in their countries. Violations of indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination and full and effective participation of indigenous peoples are among the issues highlighted. Cases of violation of their free, prior and informed consent on proposed REDD projects were also shared.

While there was a strong voice of concern on REDD from various indigenous representatives, indigenous peoples continue to put forward the common call on Parties to the Convention to recognize indigenous peoples' rights in accordance with the UNDRIP and ILO Convention No. 169 as preconditions to REDD.

Fully aware of what governments may decide in COP15, indigenous representatives reiterated that any agreement reached - whether politically or legally-binding - must recognize and respect indigenous peoples' right including their rights to lands, territories and resources, right to self-determination, right to free, prior and informed consent and traditional knowledge and innovations. Mitigation, adaptation or any climate change initiatives that will affect indigenous peoples would be opposed if there is no full recognition and protection of these rights.

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