

# **The Role of the Dayak People of Indonesia and the Philippines' Menvù Tribe of the Keretungan Mountain in Ecological Conservation: The Natural and Indispensable Partners**

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Abstrak

Tulisan ini terinspirasi dari tulisan Janis B. Alcorn dan Antoinette G. Royos, Eds. "Indigenous Social Movements and Ecological Resilience: Lessons from the Dayak of Indonesia, Biodiversity Support Program in 2000 and the Idsesenggilaha of the Menvù Tribe in Mount Kalatungan, Bukidnon, ICCA. Tulisan ini dibuat untuk mendukung tujuan Perserikatan Bangsa-bangsa tentang hak dan kesejahteraan masyarakat adat, utamanya di Asia dan pada saat sama tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menggugah kesadaran kita dan memenuhi tanggungjawab kita untuk melindungi dan melestarikan lingkungan.

## **Introduction**

There are more than 370 million estimated indigenous peoples spread across 70 countries worldwide. They live in a distinct life from those of the dominant societies. They practice unique traditions and retain a distinctive social, cultural, economic and political order. According to a common definition, they are the descendants of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means.

Moreover, the U.N. Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (1971) relies on the following definition: "Indigenous communities, peoples, and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed in their territories, considered themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis for their continued existence as peoples in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems" (UN, 2004).

Indonesia is a signatory to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, as almost all Indonesians (with the exception of the ethnic

Chinese) are indigenous, government officials argue that the concept of indigenous peoples is not applicable. As a result, the government has rejected calls for special treatment by groups identifying themselves as indigenous. Indonesia has a population of around 237 million. The government recognizes 365 ethnic and sub-ethnic groups as *komunitas adat terpencil*, geographically-isolated customary law communities. They number approx. 1.1 million. Many people, however, consider themselves, or are considered by others, to be indigenous. The national indigenous people's organization, Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN), uses the term *masyarakat adat* to refer indigenous peoples. The number of indigenous peoples in Indonesia conservatively estimated between 30 and 40 million people.

In Article 18b-2 of the third amendment to the Indonesian Constitution recognizes indigenous people's rights. Though conditional in more recent legislation, there is an implicit recognition of some rights of people referred to as *masyarakat adat* or *masyarakat hukum adat*, such as Act No. 5/1960 on Basic Agrarian Regulation, Act No. 39/1999 on Human Rights, MPR Decree No X/2001 on Agrarian Reform (IWGIA, 2014).

In the case of the Philippines, the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), or Republic Act No. 8371 of the Philippines, defines Indigenous People as follows: "Indigenous People/Indigenous Cultural Communities (IP/ICC) refer to a group of people sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized a territory. These terms shall likewise or in alternative refer to homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as a community in community-bounded and defined territory, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, and who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, become historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include people who are regarded as indigenous on account of descent from the populations which inhabited the country at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains." (The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act, RA No. 8371, 1997)

### **The Indigenous Peoples of Kalimantan: the Dayak Societies**

Kalimantan or Borneo is the enigmatic and exotic Indonesian island which is transected by wide rivers and forest plantations. Indonesian Dayak territory (collectively called Kalimantan) is divided into five provinces, East

Kalimantan, South Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, North Kalimantan and West Kalimantan. Kalimantan is the land of the indigenous Dayak people. They are the descendants of the fearless jungle warriors who practiced head-hunting and followed animistic beliefs. While there are several subgroups with different languages, social structures, and governance traditions, the Dayak societies share many features.

Rich in natural resources, the Dayak territory consists of watersheds of great rivers and vast forests which are home to an incredible diversity of fish, over five hundred species of birds, many endemic species. The forests are enriched in unknown flora including over three hundred fifty species of dipterocarps valued for their timber, and a rich fauna of rare species, including orangutans, banteng cattle, sun bears, elephants, and rhinos (Arcorn 1999). Dayaks were dependent on agriculture, fishing, hunting, and gathering products from the forest for many years and changing their emphasis as needed.

The Dayak economy is largely based on their practice of shifting cultivation of rice crop. The indigenous hill people, like the Land Dayak, the Iban, the Kayan, the Kenyah, the Kajang all have a subsistence economy, based on the shifting cultivation of dry rice (Freeman, 1960: 65). The *bilek* family, residing in a single longhouse apartment, is economically independent, fulfilling their own subsistence through the shifting cultivation of hill rice and other crops (Freeman, 1960: 66). Thus, the longhouse has no collective ownership rights over the swidden, and community is not a corporate economic group (Freeman, 1960: 69). Other studies indicated that through swidden agriculture, each family of Kenyah cultivates rice in the *ladang*, ideally on heavily forested hillsides (Conley, William W. 1973: 217). Each family has the right to use and own the land. It was said that the rule is as long as the family keeps working in the forest, that family has rights over this land (Conley, 1973, 218). Usually, relatives make their *ladang* alongside each other. Large cut down trees are used as markers to the borders of neighboring fields.

Similar to other indigenous people in Indonesia, the Dayak created an agro-ecosystem tailored to tropical forest ecosystems. The indigenous *adat* institutions—rules created and enforced consensus through community-based political processes governed the agro-ecosystems, and the behavior of the people who use them. Dayak institutions developed suitably for the ecosystems they manage. (Folke, 1997: 4)

The importance of land, forest and river to the Dayak identity is a reflection of their vision of prosperity. The shifting mosaic land use pattern that they create in the forest ecosystem in which they live is a reflection of this vision. There are patches of natural forest, managed forests, rotating swidden/fallow, and permanent fields molded to the ecological conditions

of the mountains, wetlands and river valleys of a particular community's territory in a typical Dayak land use mosaic. The only non-forest areas are the permanent wet rice fields. The forest cover is steady though each community landscape is not the same. The millions of hectares are covered in the past years by this shifting patchwork producing a huge resilient landscape. At present, communities that have ceded their lands to oil palm plantations where monoculture has replaced diversity are interspersed with communities following indigenous management practices. However, no tenurial shell to protect indigenous systems is tendered by the Indonesian Government.

The Dayak communities occupied mostly the Kalimantan's forest. In the inaccessible areas found the larger patches of forest. In other spots, Dayak communities' forests offer isolated patches of refugia habitat in an expanse of mono-cultural oil palm plantations (Alcorn, 2000). Several communities' patches of the non-Dayaks are almost similar to those of the Dayaks. Some are transitional. The historical governance under *adat* and past disruptions suffered in the area are used as determinant for the distribution of the smaller patches of land use types within a given community's patch. The decision to expand gaps in the landscape where plantations, colonists' farms and degraded lands replace healthy ecosystems, based on the centralized, national land-use decisions.

The resilience-sustaining practices and "scripts" of Dayak land use systems that produce this resilient mosaic are alike to other indigenous peoples. Moreover, due to the lower population density, it is richer in diversity. This might be due to the strong indigenous institutions that resisted colonial administration, the range of ecological variation available for exploitation in a single community and the historically large market for multiple non-timber forest products (B. Alcorn, 1990: 203-220)

Dayaks use interruption to create space for food production and use forest succession processes as a production resource similar to other swidden agriculturists (Alcorn, 1989). The community's households are bound together in mutually dependent relationships by the rituals and work activities involving rice which is central to the Dayaks' swidden system and identity. Community social unity also serves to uphold the integrity of the overall system which is necessary to respond unpredictable manmade or natural events. Dayaks increase threats by relying on a variety of resources through fishing, hunting, forest products for sale and use, and agricultural products. Based on recent experience the widespread use of auguries for decisions (like the selection of a swidden site) both supports observance to indigenous belief system and throws a randomizing variable into decisions. If the choice were based on existing ecological knowledge then this enhances the chances for experimentation in places that would not usually be chosen (Dove, 1996:564).

The quality of the agreements that the farmer made with the spirits of nature that control the harvest is believed to be dependent to the yield of swidden. The significance of the principles of reciprocity and exchange is established through the rituals associated to the bounty or scarcity of fruit yields (Dove, 1997, p 94). The quality of the relationships between people and the relationship between people and nature is observed by the Dayak through the fruit and nut harvests. The event of a scarce harvest every few years serves to remind community members of their relationships with nature and each other because many native fruits are mast fruiting species (having large production of fruit some years and none in other years).

The preservation of the equilibrium between economic dependence on forest products and subsistence rice production is Dayak's concern. This indigenous people are cautious about the necessity of maintaining a balance between a forest ecosystems and transforming it into a plantation landscape. For the Dayak, to make swidden is to be (Dove, 1997: 94). Rice cultivation is associated to major Dayak rituals. The proper swidden management implies giving properly care and respect for the rice's soul (Djuweng, 1998 p.7). The resilience of the swidden system is upheld by this belief system. When rubber prices rose and fell erratically in the 1930's, for example, one man's dream about rice-eating rubber quickly spread across Kalimantan, warning people to protect the forest swidden system and to balance rubber with swiddens.

The ecological damage from concessions and concessions cover Dayak forests are widespread at present. The ecological guideline is followed by very little few concessionaires. A national *adat* forest movement coalition insisted that the state "revoke the status of state forests by redefining the border between state forests and forests that have been owned and controlled by traditional and local communities" and "revoke all regulations and policies regarding the exploitation and violation of community rights to manage natural resources" in the early days of the Reformasi opening in 1998 (KUDETA, 2000). Although the state keeps on promising to the *adat*, it fails to radically change the situation even with formulation of the new Forest Law No.41, 1999 which aimed to answer those demands. The situation leads to the development and strengthening of the indigenous movement. To counteract these movements, the state implemented few reforms. The concessionaires continuously force the indigenous communities of Dayak to acknowledge their rights as long as the Dayak will not stand together to fight for their rights.

The challenge is how to address these new pressures from the outside since these are current situations and the Dayak people have limited ways of recognizing and facing these challenges. Dynamic adjustment necessitates acknowledgment of the situations. The Dayaks have little knowledge of the community's forests' territory. When they experience pressures from the

concessionaires they would immediately give up their rights to the land at times belonging to neighboring territory. Their limited awareness of the coming threats like that of the concessionaires will bring an impact to their indigenous way of life.

The Dayak system of administering the natural resources has existed in Kalimantan for hundreds of years. The Dayak administering method take part in preserving and maintaining Kalimantan's natural environment. For thousand years the Dayaks have coexisted with nature attesting that their system of administering natural resources is sustainable and responsive to nature.

### **The Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines: Idsesenggilaha of the Menuvù Tribe**

The Kalatungan Mountain is the 6<sup>th</sup> highest peak in the Philippines with an elevation of 2,287 meters. Located in the municipalities of Talakag, Maramag, Pangantucan and Valencia in Bukidnon Province, Mt. Kalatungan is an active volcano. The whole Mt Kalatungan Range, including Idsesenggilaha haven a diverse mix of flora and fauna being ascribed to its "numerous rivers and waterfalls, a lake and small wetland area, cliffs, caves and rock formations that...provide habitats for wildlife" (Bird Life International, 2011). Accordingly, there are around 429 species in Mt. Kalatungan. Many of these species are endangered, endemic, economically and socially important to the locals. The survey conducted by the Central Mindanao State University indicated that bird species diversity is highest in Mt. Kalatungan. The endangered Philippine Eagle locally known as the "Kalumbata" is also found in this mountainous forest. The Philippine deer and the Philippine wild pig along with several species of mountain rodents are also present. No comprehensive resource inventory has been undertaken within the forests though presence of these faunal species is confirmed by personal witnesses as this activity in the area is considered taboo by the indigenous peoples.

Several studies have offered their own interpretations of the word Manobo or *Menuvù*. The Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) explained it as "person" or "people". Saleeby (1991) suggested "man" meaning "first, aboriginal" and "tuvu" meaning "to grow". Accordingly, it could mean "the people that grow upon the island". Junamarti (1892) contends that the term "Manobo" was originally a Maguindanao word meaning "mountain people". In all cases, "Manobo" is the Spanish adopted term and was applied widely throughout Mindanao as a tribal designation (Le Bar, 1975). However, the Menuvù (Manobo) has their own meaning to their tribal designation—a meaning that is revealed in their peoples' beginning. The Kalatungan is known to the Menuvù as Keretungan. Its summit is called "Apu" as they believe that

it is the abode of an Elembiten and it serves as their tribe's guardian spirit, their ultimate protector.

The core reason why the tribe nurtured a close and protective relationship with the environment is due to the Menuvù's (Manobo) perception of the Keretungan (Kalatungan) as sacred. The sacredness of Keretungan lies on the Menuvù's belief that the mountain is the dwelling place of the various invisible spirits. The mountain is known to be the origin of their ancestors. Keretungan is the starting place of knowledge. It is the place of healing and a source of livelihood. Thus, for Menuvù tribe the mountain has spiritual, historical and economic significance. The generosity of Keretungan to them deserves reverence and gratitude to the nature spirits. They collectively call Kedelisayen and the Supreme Being, they call Megbevaya. These beliefs and the practical knowledge of taking just enough at the right place and at the right time governed the use of the mountains' resources. The Menuvù always use the right method with due permission and respect to the spirits. Otherwise, they might incur the wrath of the spirits and bring upon them punitive actions in the form of sickness, crop and hunting failure, and other disasters.

The Menuvù manage their own. Fishing, hunting, trapping, and gathering of forest products complemented the agricultural production. For these livelihood activities, the tribe has developed traditionally unique and practical mechanisms, techniques and equipment. These traditional practices are selective in the sense that they only get the adult animals that are, for example, not pregnant to make sure that the animal could breed more and the tribe could hunt in the future.

The Menuvù's way of life is entangled with its environment. This relation took many centuries to develop which molded the intertwined relationship between the Menuvù culture and their environment. As a tribe, their identity is tangled with the Idsesenggilaha. It is place of the tribe's cultural and spiritual practices such as rituals, ceremonies, and other sacred activities. The Idsesenggilaha is dotted with ritual areas. That is why the use of resources is very little and mostly constrained. Both specialized and communal, the Idsesenggilaha serves as their school. The Menuvù's activities are in accordance to their knowledge about their environment. For instance, the moon guides them to their fishing and hunting activities while the star guides to farming activities. Fundamentally, the Menuvù tribe depends on the Idsesenggilaha and the ancestral domain for survival. The water, food, medicine, shelter, materials for domestic use as well as for their livelihood activities are provided by Keretungan. The Menuvù get only what they need in the environment, if there is a surplus they either saved for later or shared with the community. The Menuvù Tribe is one of the first people to have conservative relationships with nature amidst the vicissitude of land occupation, utilization and culture.

Their spiritual beliefs guided the administration of Idsesenggilaha by means of indigenous and traditional resource management and governance systems. The preservation of the rich biodiversity of Keretungan is the main objective, because this would ensure the continuity of the tribe for generations. The Idsesenggilaha's protection and preservation of resources implies the safeguarding of the Menvù's place of rituals and sacred activities. This guarantees the permanence of their relation to Megbevaya (Supreme Being) and the nature/guardian spirits. The protection of the source of tribe's material needs not only for the present but for the future generations.

The Menvù's cultural identity is confronted with the aggravated progressive displacement from their ancestral lands after WWII because of the influx of migrants brought about by the Government resettlement program, the thriving of the logging industry and the aggressive development of agricultural activities in Bukidnon. In-migration due to possible employment from logging industry occurred. The primary reason of deforestation in the Keretungan lowland forest, however, is the period of unrestrained logging in Bukidnon between the late 1960s to early 1980s. The job offered to the Menvù is limited, from forest guides to guards of logging equipment and harvested logs. There is no effort made to restore the denuded areas. The logging companies and forest fires easily altered the forestlands into agricultural areas which accidentally cleared the areas for both the migrants' and natives' agricultural purposes. The Menvù's innate friendliness and *naïveté* made them susceptible to trickery. Being unprepared for the unexpected flood of migrants and settlers in their territories, the Menvù, gullible and naive to the ways of the lowlanders, has instantly lost most of their lands for a few tins of sardines and bottles of alcohol. At very low prices or a few bottles of drink, their abaca and coffee were bought. Many were forced into debts by which they paid with their lands. The Menvù tribe is downgraded into being squatters on their own ancestral domains. They were enforced to run into the fortification of the highlands and its forests to evade the intricacy and contentions the new society. Acculturation is suffered by those who stayed. After many years, there are some Menvù who befall as alien to their own customs and the affiliations that took incalculable amount of time to be forged has either been not remembered, put aside or submissively dropped from their lives to be substituted by the new belief systems brought by the outsiders. The change in the cultural landscape is caused by the change in the mother culture and, unavoidably, in the related biodiversity. The traditional site of the observance of their beliefs is radically narrowed and restricted to a place that has also become, in the words of authorities, environmentally-critical. Hence, the Government said that the traditional site required also special protection by the specialists.



### Challenges and Threats to the Indigenous Peoples

The preservation of ecosystem is not new for indigenous peoples. This is part and parcel of their way of life. However, the changing social, economic and political structure has greatly affected and posed threats to the indigenous communities. For example, in the case of Indonesia the government has destroyed longhouses in the 1960s. The Dayak culture is supported by the longhouses. The spirits of solidarity and collectivity are active in the everyday life in the longhouses. Hence, there is a customary transfer of knowledge between older and younger generations. The longhouses according to the government's opinion are not healthy, dissolute, and comparable to the Communists' way of life. The cohesion and solidity among the Dayak people has been undermined as a result of the alteration in the way of life from longhouse to single houses. The *adat* institution in West Kalimantan is affected. Since the person in charge of a longhouse is also in charge of the village government, this distorted the ways of assessments related to the use of resource management. Thus, the obliteration of longhouses has not only affected the Dayak's cohesion, the transmittal of indigenous knowledge and culture, and the village defense system, but it implies also a substantial modification in the source of living of the Dayak people.

The attainment of soaring monetary growth is the guidelines for the government's policies. Consequently, development plans pay no attention to the ecology and environment. It is causing serious social and cultural loss. Kalimantan is very rich in timber. Since 1968, there are 75 logging concessions operating in West Kalimantan. In 1967, there are nine million hectares of forest area in West Kalimantan. After twenty years, the forest areas have diminished to 30%. Of the total forest areas of West Kalimantan the logging concessions hold 74% or 47% of the total area (Syarif, 1999: 18.) As long as the existing policy remains, it will result in massive forest deforestation. Log production in West Kalimantan has declined by more than 50% in 1996. This tendency will put an end to West Kalimantan forests by the year 2020, according to experts. Abusive logging behaviors have caused heavy soil erosion, flood and pollution. The heavily logged areas are vulnerable to forest fires.

Transmigration and resettlement policies had an impact also on deforestation. Some transmigration locations are built by forfeiting the ancestral domain and people's way of life. There is often a direct connection between the relocation of indigenous people and the exploitation of the natural resources though the developing and modernizing justification is given to support relocation, according to some observers. The course of relocation is often expressed in terms of nationwide progress in postcolonial settings. The indigenous people are often transferred to places that are believed to be fitting for settled farming. The main aim of resettlement in Kalimantan has been to eradicate shifting cultivation and also to relocate people from areas 'valuable

in timber and mineral resources' (King, 1993:287). Moreover, in relation to indigenous people the new global economy needs their land and resources, not their labor (Kahn 1995:145).

The governance system of the indigenous peoples and communities is deeply rooted in customary knowledge and belief systems. This is true also for the Menuvù Tribe of Mt. Keretungan, Bukidnon. Any threatens to Idsesenggilaha is also threatening the rich and varied life that flourish in it and it creates a huge impact to their culture. These are the influence of the lowlands people especially to the young generations according to the Menuvù leaders. The persuasion is facilitated through education that undermines traditional knowledge and culture-insensitive laws and policies by the government.

The Philippine Association for Intercultural Development (PAFID, 2012) and Indigenous and Community Conservative Areas (2010) listed seven (7) threats that the Menuvù Tribe of Mt. Keretungan is facing at present. According to PAFID and ICCA the first threat is caused by the western education and foreign religion that weaken customary knowledge and practices acquired by the younger generations. This leads to the disruption in traditional knowledge and cultural changes. The global climate change is threatening traditional knowledge and practices of the Menuvù, especially traditional livelihood activities. The Menuvù's activities are guided by the environmental signs. The sudden changes in the weather are upsetting these activities. The constellation of the stars and the moon serve as a guide in farming and fishing. The weather is not consistent that unexpected rainstorm leads to crop failures and it compromises food security. The third threat listed by PAFID and ICCA is related to the tourism activities in Mt Keretungan (Kalantungan). The promotion of ecotourism in the Mt. Keretungan is launched by the Local Government Unit (LGU). This has become now a source of additional income for the local and indigenous communities. Unfortunately, the flooding of climbers and visitors left garbage into the Menuvù's sacred forest. The excessive noise disturbs the animals and spirits that live in the area. The fourth threat is the Menuvù Tribe's conflict with neighboring communities or associated communities with regards to the boundaries of their ancestral domain. There is also an ongoing conflict between some of the tribal leaders due to personal issues or rift between communities and sabotage coordinative and collaborative partnership relations and compromise the strengthening efforts towards biodiversity conservation and ICCA recognition and its support.

The fifth treat is due to the expanding sugarcane plantations, posing a threat to the associated biodiversity. The use of chemicals like pesticides and fertilizers caused nutrient depletion of the soil, making it unsuitable for traditional crops. Near sugarcane plantations, the pests and insects also destroy crops planted in traditional farms. At present, no sugarcane plantations are

inside the ICCA but its projected expansion is likely to happen. In addition, as it affects the economic aspect of the associated communities, the people might opt to obtain supplemental and easy money from the ICCA by putting timber and wild animals in danger for poaching. The sixth threat is the development of Napier grass plantations for biofuel industries. The hilly areas with marginal, eroded/degraded soils are conducive for Napier based biofuel production. Some part of the Menuvù ancestral domain has become one of the targets of the investors. The biggest risk is the arrival of migrants, dwelled in the ancestral domain and it is threatening land and culture security for the Menuvù. It creates the potential encroachment of Napier plantations into the Idsesenggilaha. Albeit the populace assurance, they will leave patches of forest and they will exclude the ICCA in the plantations, disintegration of the forest. It will certainly deteriorate its resilience and negatively affect biodiversity in the surrounding areas. It ultimately affects the ICCA and the Menuvù Tribe. The last treat is the extraction through hunting, mining, logging and fishing. At present, logging and mining are not main threats but it might be in the future. In some part of the Keretungan, small-scale loggings built are often owned by migrants and it remains a problem. Within the ancestral domain the Menuvù community, there has been developed a Community Conservation Plan (CCP), primarily to sustain and improve protection and conservation efforts for the ICCA as well as the improvement of the well-being of the Menuvù community.

## Conclusion

In the past, the International Labour Organization's (ILO's) Article 169 is the only internationally accepted instrument that defined the rights of Indigenous People. The ILO refers to the importance of securing Indigenous Peoples' lands and traditional knowledge and linking these to biodiversity conservation. UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People was passed at the UN General Assembly (2007) that marked an important moment for the Indigenous People global movement. Based on this Declaration, the United Nations recognized the urgent need to respect and promote the rights of indigenous people affirmed in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements with States. It further stated that indigenous people control over developments affecting them and their lands, territories and resources that enable them to maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures and traditions, and to promote their development in accordance with their aspirations and needs. The respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment (UN General Assembly 2007).

In accordance to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, any nation and government pursuing economic development programs must recognize and protect the rights of each individual, groups and various sectors in the society. The welfare of the indigenous people must not be neglected and sacrificed for the sake of progress. Any action towards this aim is supposedly environmentally sensitive. The acknowledgment that one's cultural history is dependent upon and rooted to nature that is the core of ecological preservation. Our survival is under threat without respecting nature or protecting our environment. To defend the environment devoid of safety and integrated territory is not easy.

In places very rich in biodiversity, there is an implausible opportunity lying ahead to work with Indigenous People toward the conservation of the environments. The challenge is to give the rights and social realities of the Indigenous People in ecological protection and preservation that has been recognized for thousand years. The Indigenous Peoples are the stewards of our environment. With the absence of the dynamic and efficient engagement of Indigenous peoples in ecological protection, no preservation projects will be effective. This concerns not only privileges but it also relates the efficiency of development and social impartiality in all their intentions and extents. The Indigenous people are the natural and indispensable partners in biodiversity, ecological preservation and conservation. ●

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