

As our Director-General Juan Somavia mentioned in his 2009 message for the International Day of the World's Indigenous People, *"ILO reaffirms its commitment to the promotion and realization of the rights of indigenous peoples. There has been much progress. Still, many challenges remain"*.

As we celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous People, the international community is likewise commemorating the 9th of August since its proclamation by the United Nations General Assembly in 1994. Our celebration in the Philippines took many forms – an exhibit at the Shangri-la Mall in 2006, a book launch and substantive discussion on indigenous rights and environment in UP Asian Center in 2007 and an advocacy for the ratification of ILO Convention No. 169 in 2008. Similar activities had been organized by ILO even before 2006 - a roundtable discussion on IP Development Agenda in 2004 and a Colloquium on IP Rights in 2005.

This year, the international community celebration on the International Day of the World's Indigenous People focuses on the theme "threat of HIV/AIDS to indigenous peoples". In the Philippines, we commemorate the event in partnership with NCIP with focus on the theme "Celebrating 12 Years of Ancestral Domains Development and Protection in the Philippines under the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA)".

Today, we will hear from testimonials of indigenous peoples and listen to the presentation of the framework within which the IPs and multi-sectoral service providers could work together to prepare a new medium-term Comprehensive Development Plan for Indigenous Peoples. In addition, we will have 2 important guests - Dr. Rene Ofreneo of UP SOLAIR and Ms. Amelia Supetran of UNDP) - who will present global concerns that affect the indigenous peoples – green jobs and climate change. It is hoped that the discussion will provide perspectives to be included in the development of a new comprehensive plan for indigenous peoples.

Before I end my message, let me share information on the ILO. It is a specialized agency of the United Nations that seeks to promote social justice and internationally-recognized human

and labour rights. It has a tripartite structure unique in the UN system and follows a decent work framework that promotes opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Indigenous peoples, being one of the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in many societies, are supported through ILO programs and policies such as ILO Convention No. 169, Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, 1989. ILO Convention No. 169, as the only legally-binding instrument in international law deals exclusively with the rights of these peoples. It is subject to ILO's independent supervisory mechanism, which follow-ups each ratifying country's application of the convention, in law and in practice. Its ratification in the Philippines is still under review.

A relevant milestone in IP rights protection in the Philippines was the enactment of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) – Republic Act 8371 by the government in 1997. IPRA reflects the spirit and intent of ILO Convention No. 169. Globally, there is another significant landmark in the recognition and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples which was the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) by the General Assembly of the United Nations last September 2007. The Declaration is compatible and mutually reinforces the provisions of Convention No. 169.

Let us enjoy this day, let us renew partnerships, let us recognize and celebrate the achievements of the indigenous peoples themselves and let us expand our advocacy networks to promote and protect the rights of indigenous women and men. Again, let me sincerely thank Chair Insigne and the staff of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), the key partner in organizing this event.

MARAMING SALAMAT!!!

MABUHAY ANG MGA KATUTUBONG PILIPINO!!!