

Asia Regional Seminar on Experiences and Lessons Learned concerning the Implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Rights

*27-29 April 2009
Kathmandu, Nepal*

The Asia Regional Seminar on Experiences and Lessons Learned concerning the Implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Rights was held on 27-29 April 2009 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Seminar was jointly organised by the Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN), Nepal; ILO Programme to promote ILO Convention NO. 169 (PRO 169) and the UNDP Regional Indigenous Peoples Programme (RIPP).

The main objective of the Seminar was to promote the implementation of indigenous peoples' (IP) rights in the Asia region through the discussion and dissemination of experiences, good practices and lessons learned.

The participants from the Asian region come from key indigenous organisations, government institutions with a special mandate on indigenous peoples' issues, national human rights institutions, UN organisations and donors. They were more than 80 of them. SUHAKAM was represented by Tan Sri Datuk Seri Panglima Simon Sipaun, the Vice Chairman.

The participants discussed and identified the challenges and opportunities that influence the progress of the rights of indigenous peoples in the ASEAN Region. Deriving from those challenges and opportunities, the following were among the many recommendations for governments, donor agencies, NHRIs and IPs:

Government

The governments were to ensure that commitments towards IPs were materialised; to ratify the ILO C169; to ensure budgetary commitments towards the implementation of IP rights; to ensure representation of IPs in governments; and to ensure the free, prior and informed consent of IPs before governments implement development projects that impact IPs.

Indigenous Peoples (IPs)

IPs must organise themselves effectively and to take advantage of existing laws, procedures as well as international mechanisms to ensure their rights were protected and accorded serious attention.

National Human Rights Institutions

NHRIs must monitor compliance of governments to commitments made; NHRI should also maintain network and coordination with other NHRIs for joint advocacy; NHRIs must also intensify awareness raising programmes for IPs on their rights as well as available mechanisms that could be used by IPs for the protection of their rights.

Donor Agencies

Donor Agencies such as Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Danish Agency for Development Assistance (DANIDA) need to, among others, prioritise programmes that focus of IP empowerment. They should also ensure IP representation in their agencies. There was also the need for donor agencies to establish IP policy development programmes.

CONCLUSION

The Asia Regional Seminar on experiences and lessons learned concerning the implementation of indigenous peoples' rights enabled the learning of best practices from other countries. The Seminar presented opportunities for participants from Government, IP organisations and NHRIs to assess the issues affecting the IP in their countries. The Seminar also enabled participants to assess their needs for capacity building and assistance to strengthen networking.

The Seminar had drafted a press statement that had highlighted its main findings and recommendations.