



HON.LUCILO RODRIGUEZ BAYRON

Paris, February 12, 2016

Mayor of Puerto Princesa Municipality

Cc: CENRO
CITY ENRO
PCSD
NCIP-PALAWAN
Office of the Governor
Hon. Mayor of Brooke's Point

Dear Mayor Bayron,

RE: PROTECTING THE UPLAND FARMING SYSTEM (INTEGRAL KAINGIN) OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF PALAWAN

I would like to express my grave concern in relation to the food security and cultural integrity of the indigenous people of Palawan regarding the implementation of generalized government measures *against kaingin*, which make no difference between the traditional *kaingin* practices of the local indigenous communities and those of landless migrants. My opinion is based on extensive academic research and 45 years of experience working in collaboration with the indigenous peoples of Palawan, which – in your Municipality - are now being adversely impacted by the City Ordinance on *kaingin*.

There are numerous studies and publications commissioned by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) that provide insightful analysis on the sustainability of agricultural practices amongst the peoples of Mindoro and Palawan. These studies would provide a better understanding of indigenous peoples' practices in Palawan, so to counter the ongoing 'criminalization' of their upland farming system (*kaingin*).

Dr. Harold C. Conklin, emeritus professor at Yale University, has written extensively on the agricultural practices of the Mindoro indigenous people. *The Relations of Hanunoo Culture to the Plant World* (Conklin 1954); *Hanunoo Agriculture Example of Shifting Cultivation in the Philippines* (Conklin 1963) and *Shifting Cultivation* are key publications explaining the sustainability of upland rice cultivation.

The general consensus amongst research by Dr. Conklin's and other publications suggest that the *anti-kaingin* policy is premised on a poor understanding of the agricultural practices of the indigenous people. As stated in his publications, upland rice and tuber cultivation practices is "*a traditional, year-round, community-wide, largely self-contained and ritually sanctioned way of life*". Most importantly, Dr. Conklin emphasizes that 'this practice, seldom results in the clearing of "climax forest" (i.e. old-growth forest)'. *Uma* (a swidden) is a complex ecosystem and produces rice in association with tubers and vegetables providing a wider span of food products indispensable to people survival.

Shifting cultivation, Livelihood and Food Security - New and Old Challenges for Indigenous People in Asia (Erni (ed) 2015) is a recent and detailed report that supports the sustainability of upland rice cultivation. It was commissioned by the FAO, International Work Group For Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) and can be found at the following URL: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/8a0ee1bf-0285-45fb-bf66-fd9f1f518f60/>

I strongly believe that these documents provide a more extensive understanding of the harmful impact that anti-*kaigin* measures/policies will have (and have had so far) on the livelihood of Palawan indigenous communities. Hopefully, this understanding would give credible reasons for revising such measures/policies, so that indigenous people would be allowed to sustainably farm their land, as they have done for many generations in the past.

Hoping this letter will be of help.

Best regards,



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