



ASIA INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PACT

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Media Release:

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE IN VILLAGE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

Thai and Sabahan Indigenous communities honoured by AIPP

Sabah, Malaysia – Indigenous communities have been stewards of the environment for generations, possessing a profound knowledge of our lands, ecosystems, and sustainable practices that can guide the world towards a more sustainable future.

The International community has long acknowledged the wisdom and expertise of Indigenous Peoples when it comes to environmental conservation through community-centred and spiritually-rooted land management, from which the world has much to learn about sustainable living and harmonious coexistence with Nature.

One of the most pressing challenges of our time is mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Indigenous Peoples often find themselves on the frontlines of these changes, facing threats to their traditional lands and ways of life.

Recognizing and respecting their rights to self-governance is not only a matter of justice but also a key element of effective climate action.

Against the current backdrop, the **Centers of Excellence In Village Governance** builds on AIPP's Indigenous Peoples' Self-Government and Democracy programme and the Indigenous Community Protocols Initiative led by PACOS Trust (the latter of which has been underway for the better part of a decade).

Both projects highlight self-governance over lands, territories and resources as a critical goal of Indigenous Peoples around the world.

In particular, **AIPP's Self-government and Democracy Course** is aimed at reviving and recovering Indigenous Peoples' governance systems through critical reflection and identification of the core-values governing and organizing indigenous societies.

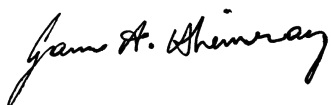
Its objective is to prepare a pool of indigenous leaders who are schooled in the knowledge and practice of indigenous governance systems, such that the nucleus for a regional movement for indigenous sovereignty, self-determination and democratization can be consolidated and advanced in Asia.

The **Indigenous Community Protocols**, on the other hand, are tools for collective internal decision-making and engagement with external entities, developed by and for indigenous communities.

Through documentation of customary institutions, rules and regulations based on indigenous worldviews, values and principles, the protocols help to re-enforce collective decision-making which in turn serves to strengthen Indigenous Peoples' self-governance systems and claims for their right to self-determination.

Through the **Centers of Excellence in Village Governance** initiative, AIPP in partnership with indigenous communities, will work to recognize and promote indigenous communities that are self-governing and strengthening their customary institutions.

Indigenous self-governing communities will be supported to become building blocks of the movement on indigenous self-governance and democracy as a long-term strategy. These communities will become "Centers of Excellence in Village Governance" and will act as the drivers of strengthening other indigenous communities in self-governance.



Gam A. Shimray

Secretary-General, AIPP

Key Points

Traditional Knowledge

Indigenous communities possess a wealth of traditional knowledge that can inform climate science and policy. This knowledge can help identify resilient and sustainable practices that benefit both local and global ecosystems.

Conservation and Biodiversity

Indigenous territories often harbor significant biodiversity. Protecting their rights to these lands is crucial for preserving biodiversity and maintaining the Earth's natural carbon sinks.

Sustainable Livelihoods

Empowering Indigenous communities to manage their lands can lead to sustainable livelihoods, such as eco-tourism and renewable energy projects, which benefit both Indigenous Peoples and the planet.

Inclusivity and Equity

Recognizing Indigenous self-governance is a step towards acknowledging historical injustices and addressing current inequalities. Climate action must be equitable and inclusive to succeed.

International Agreements

Numerous international agreements, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Articles 3 & 4 affirm our right to self-determination, which includes the right to self-governance according to traditional governance principles and practices and the Paris Agreement, emphasize the importance of Indigenous Peoples' participation in climate decision-making.

In light of these considerations, the key objective of this initiative is to support indigenous communities to develop clear visions of self-determination and strong community governance.

Through the Centers of Excellence in Village Governance structure, indigenous communities across the region will be supported to revive and preserve their traditional governance principles, practices and structures as well as the documentation and meaningful transfer of this knowledge from elders and youth.

In pursuit of this key objective, this initiative will seek to:

1. Improve Indigenous Peoples' understanding of their right to self-determination;
2. Support Indigenous communities to define what this right means for them now and in the future;
3. Facilitate the revival of governance principles, practices and structures that will enable communities to fulfill their visions of self-determination, and;
4. Support communities to document governance principles, practices and structures and strengthen systems of knowledge transfer to young people.
5. It is imperative therefore that governments, organisations, and individuals worldwide work together to support and collaborate with Indigenous Peoples. This includes respecting our self-determination, land rights, and cultural values while forging partnerships to combat climate change collectively.

About AIPP

The Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) is a regional organization founded in 1988 by indigenous Peoples' movements and established its Secretariat in 1992. It is committed to the cause of promoting and defending indigenous peoples' rights and human rights as a whole. It aims to strengthen the movements of indigenous peoples of Asia for recognition of their collective rights, and protection of traditional knowledge, bio-diversity and environment for sustainable and self-determined development.

For more information, please visit aippnet.org

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