



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH MINING-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES IN BENGUET, PHILIPPINES, CALL FOR GENUINE FPIC

We, the members of the Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders network in Asia, stand in solidarity with the people of Sitio Dalicno, Barangay Ampucao, Itogon and Barangay Bulalacao, Mankayan, both in Benguet province, in their struggles against the mining expansion of Itogon-Suyoc Resources, Inc. (ISRI) and the renewal of the mining permit of Crescent Mining and Development Corporation (CMDC).

Benguet province is home to Ibaloi and Kankanaey Indigenous Peoples who have depended on their lands for livelihood and cultural integrity since time immemorial. For over a century, large-scale mining operations by companies like Benguet Corporation, Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company, and ISRI have caused irreversible environmental damage, economic displacement and various threats to the ways of life of the Indigenous Peoples. Exacerbating this situation and the current impacts of the climate crisis are the constant threats of landslides and ground subsidence due to the long-time underground bulk mining activities which have already led to loss of lives, homes and livelihood sources.

What is left of the Indigenous Peoples' lands is being targeted for more plunder and destruction by big mining companies, mostly subsidiaries of transnational companies. Despite the enactment of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997, their right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) continues to be violated as in the case of ISRI's application for mining license (Application for Production Sharing Agreement) and the renewal of the mining license (Mineral Production Sharing Agreement) of CMDC.

Renewal of CMDC's Mining License Without Free, Prior and Informed Consent

Since 1996, the Crescent Mining and Development Corporation (CMDC) held a 25-year mining license (MPSA 057-96-CAR), covering 533.4 hectares of land in Mankayan, Benguet. On June 27, 2025, Australia's Blackstone Minerals Ltd. acquired ownership of the project following its merger with IDM International Limited through which United Kingdom's Bezant Resources previously held ownership interest in the project.

CMDC's license expired on November 12, 2021. Under the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples' (NCIP) Administrative Order No.3, Series of 2012, all mining operations should have ceased until a Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process was completed and an FPIC certification (Certification Precondition) is issued.

However, in 2021, instead of facilitating an FPIC process, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples – Cordillera Administrative Region (NCIP-CAR) issued a certification which stated that it has no objection to the renewal of the CMDC's mining license. The certification issued by the NCIP was not a Certification Precondition nor does it constitute of FPIC. Yet in March 2022, the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, using the defective "certification" from NCIP, granted CMDC a renewal of its mining license. By all means, the renewal of the mining license, which meant another 25 years of mining operations, is flawed and illegal.

As a consequence of the illegal renewal of CMDC's mining permit, the CMDC continued its drilling activities. In 2022, the affected communities were forced to mount a barricade to stop the operations, and successively submitted petitions and complaints to the NCIP, MGB, Commission on Human Rights, and the Office of the Ombudsman (the constitutional body responsible for investigating and prosecuting Philippine government officials accused of crimes, especially graft and corruption). In 2024, the NCIP constituted an FPIC Team which proceeded with the FPIC process despite the fact that the illegal renewal of the mining permit has not been addressed. It was therefore a defective FPIC process which the affected communities reluctantly joined for fear

of being maligned or redtagged. Nevertheless, their opposition was ignored, and a Memorandum of Agreement was still produced and signed. Worse, community leaders were still red-tagged.

On August 27, 2025, representatives from the affected communities held a press conference in Baguio City reiterating their rejection of the renewal of CMDC's mining license.

The Fight Against ISRI's Mining Expansion

The Itogon Suyoc Resources Inc. (ISRI), currently a subsidiary of Filipino-owned company Apex Mining, started its operations in 1930 through the Sangilo Mines in Itogon and the Suyoc Mines in Mankayan. It is currently expanding its mining operations by applying for a mining license (Application for Production Sharing Agreement or APSA 103) to operate in an additional 581 hectares of land covering Barangays Ampucao, Poblacion and Virac in Itogon. The mining area applied for encompasses residential homes, water sources, and traditional livelihood areas. The mining license would allow mining 22 million tons of gold-bearing ore over a period of 25 years.

Since 2018, ISRI has been hounding the consent of the affected communities through the FPIC process. In 2022, an Itogon-wide Resolution of Non-consent was issued but the company appealed for reconsideration, followed by a tumultuous process of FPIC manipulation. Irregularities in the FPIC process were observed by the Dalicno community in Barangay Ampucao, such as the lack of information on the community assemblies, absence of an honest and comprehensive environmental impact assessment, and misrepresentation from NCIP-authorized Itogon representatives. The mining application has also caused a divide among community members. The pro-mining Itogon Indigenous Peoples Organization claimed that the FPIC process has been duly complied with. However, the fact that Dalicno residents have consistently opposed the project should have been a sufficient basis for no consent.

In 2024, Dalicno residents submitted petitions and held dialogues with the Mines and Geosciences Bureau and the NCIP regional offices, dialogues with local government units, and months of barricade. Despite this, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between ISRI, the NCIP, and the Itogon Indigenous Peoples Organization in September 2023. An FPIC certification (Certification Precondition) was likewise issued by the NCIP in December 2024.

On July 21, 2025, representatives of Sitio Dalicno filed a civil case at a Regional Trial Court against ISRI, Mines and Geosciences Bureau, NCIP, and the Itogon Indigenous Peoples Organization for violating their rights to their ancestral land by not securing legitimate and inclusive FPIC. The case seeks to stop the processing and approval of the mining license.

Call for Solidarity and Urgent Action

The persistent violation of Indigenous Peoples' rights to their lands and resources, Free Prior and Informed Consent, and self-determination in Benguet, Philippines demands urgent action. We are one with the Indigenous Peoples in Benguet province in calling for the following:

1. **For the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) of the Philippines to uphold genuine Free Prior and Informed Consent.** This means denying the issuance of the Certification Precondition to Crescent Mining and Development Corporation for the renewal of its mining license MPSA 057-96-CAR, and withdraw the anomalous Memorandum of Agreement and Certification Precondition for Itogon-Suyoc Resources, Inc.'s APSA 103 mining application.
2. **For the NCIP Commission En Banc to remand CMDC's application back to the Indigenous Cultural Communities and Indigenous Peoples of Mankayan** for the conduct of a proper and genuine FPIC process.
3. **For the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) of the Philippines to immediately recall and void the illegal renewal of Crescent Mining and Development Corporation's MPSA 057-96-CAR.**
4. **For the NCIP Commission En Banc, Office of the Ombudsman, Commission on Human Rights and other concerned government agencies and bodies to**

thoroughly investigate all violations of the FPIC process, including the red-tagging of Indigenous leaders who oppose these projects.

5. **For the Itogon-Suyoc Resources, Inc., Crescent Mining and Development Corporation, and other mining companies targeting Benguet province to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples** to their ancestral lands, resources and self-determination.

6. **For the Philippine government to seriously uphold the rights of Indigenous Peoples** to their ancestral lands, resources, and human rights and hold both government agencies and private companies accountable for any violation of Indigenous Peoples' rights.

By signing this statement, we stand with the Indigenous Peoples of Benguet and commit to supporting their struggle for land, life, and self-determination.