

Joint Statement from the Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders Network in Asia and the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact

At the Regional Dialogue Session for Indigenous Peoples in Asia on the IFC/MIGA Sustainability Framework Update

Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2026 (Philippines Time) |
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I am Surti Handayani, speaking on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders Network in Asia. I would like to share our collective voices from a preparatory meeting of IPHRDs focal organizations in Asia and the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, which took place on 8 May 2026 ahead of this Regional Dialogue Session for Indigenous Peoples in Asia on the IFC/MIGA Sustainability Framework Update.

We thank the organizers for conducting this Regional Dialogue Session for Indigenous Peoples in Asia on the IFC/MIGA Sustainability Framework Update, recognizing the importance of consultations with Indigenous Peoples in Asia.

I would like to share the key discussion points, including some recommendations that emerged from our preparatory meeting, for your consideration. During the meeting on 8 May, Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders (IPHRDs) from Bangladesh, Indonesia, mainland India, and Thailand, along with colleagues from AIPP, shared their experiences, concerns, and recommendations related to World Bank-funded projects and the implementation of safeguards at the country level.

We discussed the consultation process with Indigenous Peoples in Asia, where two-thirds of the world's Indigenous Peoples live, as well as the implementation of the World Bank's Sustainability Framework and safeguard policies, and the impacts of World Bank-funded projects on Indigenous Peoples' territories.

Participants shared experiences related to infrastructure, road connectivity, and extractive industry projects funded or supported by international financial institutions. Concerns were raised that, while safeguard policies and commitments exist on paper, their implementation at the country level remains weak. Several participants emphasized that the World Bank and IFC formally recognize the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); however, in practice, the principles of UNDRIP, particularly Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and Indigenous Peoples' rights to land, territories, and self-determination, are not consistently respected. Moreover, implementing agencies, government institutions, and companies involved in World Bank-funded projects often fail to comply with safeguards, climate commitments, and FPIC principles.

Participants also stressed the need for the meaningful participation of directly affected Indigenous communities. Concerns were raised regarding who represents Indigenous Peoples in these processes, whether grassroots voices are adequately included, and whether consultations genuinely influence project outcomes. The importance of ensuring effective communication, proper timing, interpretation support, and accessible consultation mechanisms was repeatedly emphasized.

Participants reflected on previous consultation efforts in Siem Reap, Cambodia, in 2024 and noted that, despite engagements over the past two years, there have been limited concrete outcomes or

follow-up actions. Participants agreed on the importance of developing a stronger collective voice and coordinated regional advocacy.

Our Recommendations

We urge the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to ensure the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights and provide the following recommendations to strengthen Indigenous Peoples' engagement and improve the Sustainability Framework review process.

- The World Bank and IFC should fully respect and implement the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), particularly Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), self-determination, and Indigenous Peoples' rights to lands, territories, and customary governance systems.
- Regional consultations should include in-person meetings in Asia and provide interpretation support for country participants who face language barriers, in order to ensure the meaningful participation of grassroots Indigenous communities.
- The World Bank should establish transparent and inclusive processes for the formation of Indigenous Peoples Advisory Groups (IPAG), ensuring representation from regional Indigenous Peoples platforms in Asia, Indigenous Human Rights Defenders, grassroots Indigenous communities, national and focal Indigenous Peoples organizations, as well as women, youth, Indigenous Peoples with disabilities, and affected communities.
- Consultation processes should ensure sufficient notice, accessible information, and effective communication so that Indigenous Peoples can meaningfully engage in discussions and decision-making processes.
- Stronger monitoring and accountability mechanisms should be established to ensure that companies implementing World Bank-funded projects comply with safeguard policies, climate commitments, and FPIC requirements.
- The World Bank should follow up on the recommendations from previous dialogues in Asia, as well as the joint letter previously submitted by Indigenous Peoples organizations in Asia, and ensure that Indigenous Peoples' feedback and recommendations are meaningfully incorporated into the Sustainability Framework review and future project implementation processes.