

## Second Session Forum on Minority Issues

### Statement by Jannie Lasimbang, Chairperson Rapporteur of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

#### Agenda item 7: Concrete steps to advance minority political participation and to build capacity of minorities to participate effectively

*Kopivosian.* Congratulations on your appointment Madame Chairperson. I am very pleased to participate in this important Forum as the Chairperson Rapporteur of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

First of all, I would like to acknowledge the excellent work of Gay McDougall, independent expert on minority issues, including the background document on minorities and effective political participation. The Expert Mechanism or EMRIP was established by the Human Rights Council through resolution 6/36 in December 2007 as a subsidiary expert body to provide the Council with thematic expertise on the rights of indigenous peoples. This thematic expertise focuses mainly on studies and research-based advice.

I see many similarities in the work that the Council has requested the Expert Mechanism which I believe can be drawn from the work of this Forum. Last year, the theme of the study was on education, looking at the challenges and lessons learned in implementing the right of indigenous peoples to education. This year, the Expert Mechanism was requested by the Council to embark on a study on Indigenous Peoples and the Right to Participate in Decision-Making. The study will be conducted over a two-year period, with the first progress report due to be presented at the third session of the Expert Mechanism in July 12 – 16 next year. I believe the report from this Forum will be an important input to EMRIP's own study and I look forward to its completion and to build closer cooperation with you.

Madame Chair, I would like to draw some parallel experiences by indigenous peoples regarding concrete steps to advance minority political participation and to build capacity of minorities to participate effectively. In my view, the promotion and call for implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or the UNDRIP adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2007 is perhaps one of the most important way to advance indigenous peoples' rights, including political participation. Efforts to build capacity to participate effectively needs to be grounded on the understanding by all concerned - including States, UN bodies, relevant organisations and especially indigenous peoples themselves - of the fundamental rights contained in the Declaration. Indigenous peoples all over the world are inspired by the UNDRIP, which is seen not only as a document that affirms indigenous peoples aspiration to be recognised and respected for who they are, but also reflect hope for reconciliation between States and indigenous peoples.

In the same way, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities could be an anchor for efforts to advance rights of minorities. The Expert Mechanism, in elaborating the rights of indigenous peoples uses the UNDRIP as its normative framework, together with other relevant international human rights law. Recognition and respect by States of the rights of minorities in their own countries in line with the Declaration is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of fundamental rights by persons belonging to minorities. The adoption of measures in the forms of action plans and policies that ensures pluralism and non-discrimination, are then necessary to implement the Declaration.

Madame Chair, in advancing political participation and enhancing capacities of minorities, the recognition of organisations and institutions established by minorities themselves also need to be respected and supported. Too often interference by States and others, on these organisations and institutions have occurred, effectively weakening effective and organised political participation in matters that affect the lives of persons belonging to minorities.

In closing, I would like to say that I concur with the draft recommendations that the independent expert has elaborated in document A/HRC/FMI/2009/4.

Kotohuan/Thank you.