

**THE NEED FOR A CLEAR VISION**  
Rt. Rev'd. Alexander Arsay-Wandag, Sr.

**7<sup>th</sup> Igorot International Consultation**

**Theme:** Nurturing our Culture and Resources to Chart and Secure our Destiny. Banaue Hotel,  
Banaue, Ifugao, Philippines  
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First of all, this must be a very important event – something that you hold dear in your hearts to bring you to travel half the globe. This is a very good sign – it means you recognize the pivotal role played by the Igorot Global Organization.

At the outset, let me pay tribute to all Igorot Global Organization officers and members, both international and the national fronts under the leadership of Mr. Ray Baguilat, President for international, and the headship of Mr. Juan B. Ngalob, President, for the national.

I also acknowledge the presence of our political leaders: Hon. Teddy Baguilat Jr., Governor, Hon. Solomon Chungalao, Representative of the Lone District of Ifugao, members of the Sanguniang Panlalawigan, all Mayors and Sanguniang Bayan, Barangay Officials, government agencies, ethno groups, civic organizations and individuals whose effort have made this consultative conference possible.

The banner headline of this occasion is **7<sup>th</sup> Igorot International Consultation**. At this stage, I wish to state that figuratively, if, this is what this conference is all about, then, we are looking for a round table – the round table of King Arthur and his Knights when they, too, were pursuing a dream, searching for a vision – for the IGO, a vision of a Cordillera Society embracing all ethno groups who aspire for that illusive dream of prosperity with the hope that linking together as one big family, will be the instrument that will bring us there. And so, whether a table is round, triangle or oblong, definitely, it is a round table we are really in, because we are all seeking the fulfillment of our vision and the aspiration of every single Cordilleran.

It is certainly most fitting that on this occasion we pay respect to our brothers and sisters of the Igorot Global Organization. While this gathering is a consultative agenda, we acknowledge it to have a profound meaning and its beginnings may go far back than we can tell. Your beginnings, be it when you left the country or when you began the organization or when you began supporting projects in Igorot land, that certainly involved generosity and the decision to give it the very best of your selves in pursuit of cherished goals for you and your folks back home.

We honor you today for joining the exodus of Filipinos in the search of the land flowing with milk and honey that which is called by many names: the “Filipino diaspora”, to the activists “modern day refugees”, to the government “modern day heroes”. The phenomenon of the diaspora is double edged, somebody loses, somebody gains. To put it constructively, you have not left your old *ato/ dapa-ay/ dappoan*, in my Madukayong culture, we say, You have not left “*Sey dallipong*” to abandon the home, but rather to expand your selfhood, for as the nations you serve take, this nation takes back and so that is why you’re here in Banaue! But of course your country of origin paid the highest price. Some think that this phenomenon is threatening. **Indeed, it is!** Our communities paid the highest sacrifice and continue to do so. All over the world, our thousands of skilled nurses pamper patients not their people, our doctors heal the same (faceless peoples), our lawyers attend order in the parking lots, our teachers nurture kids not their own, our sailors staff commercial ships of shipping magnates, our engineers turn turbines of Arab States, our theologians sorts mails in federal postal services as hundreds of thousands of our women keep house for a million of homes worldwide.

Leaving Cordillera land might not have been your choice, but coming back to join us is a choice – you have come back to your roots even if for a while only, to share your talents, your insights, your good fortune and above all, to say **thank you** to Cordillera for you will always be a Cordilleran.

Today, you, having led responsible and productive lives and feeling fulfilled, you, our *balikbayan* brothers and sisters, do us a great favor. You have shown that anybody who has the courage and the willingness to strive hard can succeed at what ever endeavor you focus your mind on. The path you have taken, because you are a few, is referred to by Robert Frost in his poem, "The Road Less Traveled By."<sup>1</sup>

That path of excellence is unappealing to second raters. The rugged road you took is rough and tough because traversing it required dedication, sacrifice, patience, commitment and deliberate efforts to go up the ladder, and because at every turn, you made choices that committed you to the attainment of more difficult goals as you carried added responsibilities. It is the "via dolorosa" to the men and women of the cloth who too joined the diaspora. The example of "**you**" is itself a model of every Cordilleran.

We have often looked up to every *balikbayan* to be committed to a path; you know that your destiny is tied up to our folks at home, our folks' destiny is not a matter of chance; your choice to offer them that possibility to making better their lot is a decision that rests upon your good will, just as it is their choice to make the best of what you can extend them.

Your problems and challenges abroad are as much as ours here... The challenge we put before you will confront your personal comforts as you comfort the afflicted. There are two alternatives you can pick from; join the "*ania garud*" group or the "*torokta ampey*" of Maducayan or the "*Ine toto-an baw es sa*" of the kankanai or "*nangamong hi gorman*" of Ifugao and the second choice is a disciplined filled life of the dedicated and determined handful – to be the rudder of a wandering ship at sea. In fact, many of our educated young people are beneficiaries of foreign dollars earned by our dedicated Filipinos.

Every individual in this hall has actually begun this quest of commitment to discipline and excellence. And that is why you're here in a consultative agenda. Nations like Japan and South Korea rose from the ravages of war and the squalor and stink of poverty have relied heavily on the commitments and dedication of their citizens to build a haven from the ashes of the Second World War. As we know they have more than succeeded. To help our people become more relevant to prevailing needs and in the development process, let us help prepare them for the future. In this respect, education is the indispensable tool in the attainment of individual visions, be it formal, informal and non formal.

I am also very happy to note that the conveners of the 7<sup>th</sup> International Consultative Agenda had from the outset, spelled out consultation as its core, for its meaning to me is that, every individual's opinion in this conference matter. Be that as it may, we are doing everything together from the start. Let us then involve at this point the experts, the dreamers, the visionaries, the educators, the planners, the economists, the politicians and all those who can give us gainful insights and better perspectives on the areas we will tackle, then and only can we be on the right path.

I am sure that this is the right forum for a series of round table discussions. To typify the word round, allow me to propose some topics for consideration as you stated in your invitation that the basis of the honor afforded me as keynote speaker, is my "wide experience and expertise in regard the concerns of the Igorot".

I've ministered long with them and continue to do so as their pastor today. I have been their listener for close to two decades and a participant as well in their various quests. As listener, I've taken the role of proactive and reactive agent. Among several sentiments, I wish to present and which I have listened too often from the grassroots and among the affluent are at least five topics of concern which I recommend should be tackled during the consultation hours. These are 1) Development of our Own Languages and Education Systems; 2) Cultural Heritage and its Recognition and Sustainability; 3) Control of Ancestral Lands/ Domains and Territories; 4) Cultural Resources Rights; and 5) Equal Protection and Non-Discrimination of IPs for Cultural Integrity.

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<sup>1</sup> English Anthologies

## **1. Development of our own Languages and Education Systems.**

The promotion and development of our own languages and indigenizing our educational system in order to preserve our oral traditions and literature, culture, arts and world views is all too important!

### **Of Languages.**

Multicultural education is not achieved by the mere presence of ethnically or linguistically diverse students in a school. The nature of learning, the topic of discussion and social interaction this perspective suggests can serve as the guiding principle for a multicultural curriculum focused on cultural empowerment. Used to its fullest potential, multicultural education can be not only an important vehicle for cross cultural understanding among students but critically, it is important in achieving equity for a greater diversity of our students within an Indigenous People's society.<sup>2</sup>

When we use our languages in the curriculum, our own people can express themselves in writing, they have a means of achieving fulfillment and self identification. In addition, we will find our folks contributing to the preservation of our cultural values by putting their stories and traditions into written forms.

Using our languages in written form makes our people aware on how to maintain good health, hygiene and prevention of disease through fliers printed in his own language rather than in a language that has no affects to him. He gains confidence and courage, for at his disposal, he can read the laws concerning his rights, he can collect people's folklores, folk medicine, farm methods and if he wishes, share information on agricultural technologies such as fishponds, chicken and hog raising.

Our students from linguistically and culturally diverse families are often defined by a feature they share, a lack of English speech and a lack of Tagalog or Filipino speech. How can our schools in the Cordillera cope with the mode of instruction delivered in two languages, English and Filipino, which they cannot speak and cannot understand? Should we maintain the existing model of education developed by this country which is based on Tagalog/Filipino speaking environment and on a more sophisticated level, the Filipino/ English speaking children?<sup>3</sup>

### **Of Education.**

Basic education is the ten years of schooling of a child from Grade I to high school. The assumption is that basic education should provide the Filipino citizen with tools for a productive and useful life in a competitive society and competition is tide up to who speaks good English.<sup>4</sup> Well said!

The vision of education in 1995 was for the country to hit 75% mean score in all tests administered by year 2000 and yet in the last elementary achievement test for 2006, mastery level was only 14.4%, near mastery was 46.5% and low mastery was 39.1%, and topping it all is a dropout of 35% in grade IV.<sup>5</sup>

This is a dismal reality. And who suffers most but our own minority groups? The problems are complex but I can cite a few of them. Teachers lack books and materials and resources with which to teach,<sup>6</sup> teachers often work with curricula and programs which were prepared for Tagalog speaking

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<sup>2</sup> Colin Baker with Ofelia Garcia, Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 1996

<sup>3</sup> Gloria D. Baguingan, I Can Read With Comprehension: Teach me via the First Language Component-Bridging Program, A position on Legislative Proposals presented to the Com. On Education and Culture, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Bonifacio P. Sibayan, The Language Issue in Education, Congressional Oversight Committee on Education, 1994

<sup>5</sup> [www.picpa.com/ph.articles/education3.pdf](http://www.picpa.com/ph.articles/education3.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Sibayan, op. cit.

children; and the most basic of all these problems is that the medium of instruction to teach these subjects are English and Filipino – languages not spoken and comprehended by our children of the rural areas. Because of the language problem, pupils with otherwise great potential drop out of school!<sup>7</sup>

Educating our Cordillera minority children is a major concern of Cordillera Stakeholders. For many of these children, school is not a successful experience. 35% leave school not completing fourth grade.<sup>8</sup> Confronted with this dismal reality, members of the Igorot Global Organization are challenged to do something different. As an organization, initiate change in teaching methods, adopt a new curricula to fit the environs of our people, redirect the mode of instruction and help in outsourcing support for this new direction. For through this organization, we can be a voice who must seriously engage in today's educational reform efforts. As I speak, there are four house bills sitting in Congress today,<sup>9</sup> three house bills advocating an all English mode of instruction and one bill advocating an all Tagalog/Filipino mode of instruction. How can we be a voice to suggest an alternative whereby our language and culture is part of the curriculum?

## **2. Cultural Heritage and its recognition and sustainability**

Choosing Banaue as venue for this occasion signifies a proud testament to the ingenuity of the Ifugao Rice Terraces Culture. This artistry is shared by other linguistic groups of the Cordillera.

The magnificence of the “8th Wonder of the World” is an indicator of our people's capacity to live in balance with nature and, to an artistic birthright. It cannot deserve less as this ancient rice terraces in Ifugao has been pronounced in 1995 by UNESCO as “The World Heritage Site.” These terraces are located at Batad and Bangaan, Banaue, at Nagacadan in Kiangan and at Mayoyao Central. A Second Pronouncement of UNESCO is the Hudhud of the Ifugaos considered to be the “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” declared in 2001.<sup>10</sup> I will not feel inferior to mention today that Natonin, Mt. Province Rice Terraces, where I come from, has been cited as the “Most Expansive Rice Terraces of the Philippines” declared by the Bureau of Soils Survey in 1972 conducted by the Bureau of Soils and Water Management.<sup>11</sup> Looking at these terraces, one wonders at the unmatched skill and wisdom of their indigenous builders. For today, these terraces still function as they did, when they were freshly built, thousand of years ago!

The Igorots through the centuries have had no voice, they, living outside the eco-social mainstream of Philippine Society. Today, some cultural traditions and indigenous values are as much threatened with extinction as our endangered flora and fauna. Only lately has the Arts served as the forum which has given a voice to our marginalized Igorots. In fact, such as our music and dances, the *Panagbenga* of the Benguet, *Lang-ay* of the Ibontok, *Gotad*<sup>12</sup> of the Tawali Ifugaos, *Imbayah* of Banaue, *Ullalim* of Kalinga, *Arya* of Abra helped articulate our peoples' dream and aspirations, their hopes and their needs. The Cordilleran culture is the top root that reaches deep to sustain the stems and foliage of creativity of social ideas.

Language is one of the extremely important and positive elements of a culture since it constitutes a means of communication as well as reflecting all aspects of a culture. In fact, the expression of a culture is funneled into a **vessel**... this vessel is language. Language is the key trait for the preservation of group unity and sense of identity for the individual. If we consider preserving and

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<sup>7</sup> Baguingan, op. cit. The First Language Component-Bridging Program, Asian Reading Congress, Literacy and Bilingualism, 1996

<sup>8</sup> [www.picpa.com/ph.articles/education3.pdf](http://www.picpa.com/ph.articles/education3.pdf) op.cit

<sup>9</sup> HB no. 230 by Rep. Villafuerte, HB no. 305 by Gullas, HB no. 446 by Del Mar and HB no. 1138 by Rep Maza

<sup>10</sup> Dulawan, Manuel, this information has been verbally related as literature was not available.

<sup>11</sup> Foryasen, Bernard, this information has been verbally related as literature was not available.

<sup>12</sup> Dulawan, op. cit  
Natividad S. Sui

propagating our oral cultural heritage, therefore, our languages ought to be considered worthy to be used in education for through it, the written word contributes to the preservation of all repertoires relative to the culture of our own people. When our languages are used for communication and self expression, this written literature contributes to the group's expectation and to our own personal dignity and self esteem.

### 3. Control of Ancestral Lands, Domains and Territories

Economic structures that have been built by IPs, the like of their rice fields, corn lands, their forests, the Ifugao *muyongs*, the Maducayan *tarun*, the Balangao *pinuchu* and *pudchok*, and other cultural territories of CAR IPs and their way of life should be sustained and encouraged to be preserved as they participate freely on an equal basis in the economic and social structures and political development of this country.

When development comes to their areas, their plights are ignored in favor of what government says **is development**. One specific example is the case of Didipio.<sup>13</sup> The IPs have been deprived of their rice fields in favor of a "beautiful road" as stated by the Oxiana now Royalco Mining company. Our IPs however claims they have no need of a "good road" they have need of the rice fields and corn lands to sustain their basic needs.

IPs must have unhampered access to their lands and natural resources particularly in the light of the fundamental right to their ancestral domain lands and natural resources as for example, the potential minerals as Coal, copper, Chromites, manganese, gold mines located in CAR and Region 2, areas incidentally occupied by the IPs. Developing these reserves must involve our people and its development must be sensitive to their culture. Data furnished by NCIP states that there are only 25 ancestral domains delineated and awarded to the whole of Cordillera: Benguet (10), Abra (6), Ifugao (1), Mt. Province (3), Kalinga (3), Apayao (1) and Baguio (1).<sup>14</sup> There are just 25 ancestral domains approved. Are these the only ancestral domains in Car? Lack of funds seems to be the reason hampering the delineation of ancestral domain. Very surprising indeed as funding seems not a problem with the anti-terror war in Mindanao and agricultural fertilizer for the rice farms in metro manila blamed on a certain Joc2. This must be the mother of all jokes. Perhaps IGO might want to adopt ancestral domains and source the needed funding for the delineation.

### 4. Cultural Resources Rights

There is protection<sup>15</sup> against exploitation of IPs intellectual and cultural property, traditional knowledge about farming, environment, medicinal plants rights and ceremonies and oral and written folklores and dances.

In decades past, Cordillerans, notably the Ifugaos, have been hosts to researchers, national and international.<sup>16</sup> In some cases, as per observation, these researchers earned graduate degrees via the hospitality of these ethno groups. Great scholars normally acknowledge host families or host towns relative to their researches, sadly, many of these researchers have not been generous to put even just a line to recognize the services of our people. We must put a stop to this form of exploitation!

The protection of indigenous knowledge, practices and resources is the essential prerequisite for any partnership with any entity based on justice and equality. We are hoping that through the voice of the Igorot Global Organization, we ought to plead that the law on Cultural Resources Rights<sup>17</sup> and be

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<sup>13</sup> Longid, Richard,

<sup>14</sup> EDS Social Ministry Office supplied the information as regards the IPs of Didipio

<sup>14</sup> Wandag, Basilio, info supplied via CP.

<sup>15</sup> R.A 8371, NCIP

<sup>16</sup> Dulawan, op. cit

<sup>17</sup> NCIP, Sec. 4

viewed as a fundamental instrument for linking cultural-educational-environmental protection rights to the extent that the existence of the former guarantees the latter. As from observation, the transfer of knowledge (history, medicinal plants) and practices like *buni*, *baki*, *kanyao*, and other rites, arts (carvings, music, dances, games) has actually led to degradation, to perversion or even just destroy their resources.

Furthermore, the know-how relating to the sustainable management of crafts, biodiversity, agricultural and food products (*inasinan*, *bayas*, *baya*, *tapuy*), medicines and any traditional environmental management techniques developed by the Cordilleran should be considered full fledged inventions and the fruit of scientific processes. They must be considered intellectual properties of the community that produced them, hence legally protected to constitute a major source of benefits and revenue for those concerned.

I have not brought up these topics because of its many implications, but because it should provide us new food for thought and proposals that seek a more adequate approach to the issues. It is time that we draft a mechanism for our own protection as we face entrants of outsiders coming to our communities.

### **5. Equal Protection and Non-discrimination of IPs for Cultural Integrity.**

Indigenous cultural communities otherwise known as Indigenous Peoples are those who resisted colonial rule, foreign domination and westernization. They have retained their own cultures, traditions and customary laws. Today in most cases, their rights as indigenous people's have been violated if not outright ignored as cultural sentimentalism and anti-development.

In the declaration of principles and state policies on social justice and human rights in the equal protection laws of the constitution of the RP and the charter of the UN and the universal declaration of human rights, the state shall with due recognition of their distinct characteristics and identity accord to the members of the IPs, the rights, protection and privileges enjoyed by the rest of the citizenry (Sec. 21, RA no. 8371).

How? By virtue of their topography, living in the interiors of mountains, hillsides and forests make them vulnerable to all types of neglect and of abuses. Isn't it human rights violation that they are denied amenities enjoyed by the majority group such as electricity, cyber education, basic infrastructures as all weather roads (not trails) and the worst of it is the harassment into their lands?

In this century, prejudice among our foreign and our majority brothers persists. It is not demeaning to be an IP, however, being human we feel that unintended snide remarks erode our self-esteem. "The truth is that we had all been born of an accident. I have not chosen to be born of IP parents and neither were my parents chose the area where they have been born."<sup>18</sup> It is ironic that in this cyber age and with the advancement of travel and communication which practically made the world a small village, not much happened or is happening for the inhabitants of this small global village to know and respect each other. The "bowing bowing pretty Igorot girl"<sup>19</sup>, tag is detrimental to would be brilliant IP lady writers whose papers and books are not appreciated (save for their being pretty Igorot girl) and worst downgraded simply because of the tag. Other reference to the igorot by foreign chronicle as well as by our majority brothers as: "animals who are advance"<sup>20</sup>, uncivilized people, headhunters, dreadful religious rituals, dog eating predators, vagrant beggars roaming the streets of Baguio and Manila, man very sick and spitting blood yet laughing and happy, Padi ti Igorot or simbaan ti Igorot, still persist. We too discriminate our fellow ethno groups in the cordillera, sometimes for reasons we think we are more superior than the others. What with the: "ine iPidlisanka ay adi men-am-ames, (you are an iPidlisan who does not care to take a bath), Ilagud ka ay anak di buso, (you are from the east child of an enemy), Ikalingaka nga agpatpatay ti tao (you are an Ikalingga who enjoys killing people),

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<sup>18</sup> Baguingan, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> Song

<sup>20</sup> Bishop Edward Malecda, History of the Episcopal Church.

iBengnet nga Shaymango (very shy iBenguet), Ifuntok nga Werwer or Ifabfey ka tet-ewa, Ipugao ka nga agtuptupra dara rumugit iti balay ken kalsada (Ifugaos spit blood and makes the houses and roads dirty) and sometimes we also discriminate our Majority brothers: Iloko nga sadut awan ammona (Ilokano is lazy and knows nothing), iVisaya nga goropa (Visayans are vampires). The best that an IP can do is to preserve dignity and self respect, accept the circumstance and make the best of it instead of brooding and being bitter. The majority group on the other hand must see this point and accept us for what we are. Sadly, that's not the way it works... we are still perceived as lower class citizens. The IP have fundamental rights to have access to opportunities in the manner that the majority groups have, and given such openings, the IP is as smart and as poised as her majority counterpart. All Filipinos share intellectual rights and duties as peoples who are entitled to the same measure designed to enable them to become partners in the pursuit of national building and common welfare.

### **Recommendation and Conclusions.**

Here are the recommendations or plans of actions I want to present if this Consultative Assembly pleases.

1. Creation of a Council of Indigenous Cultural Communities who can advise the President's Office on Policies Affecting the IPs of CAR in consultation with NCIP and PA for Cordillera in all areas of concern;
2. Establishment of Ethnic Studies on Languages and Cultures in each local college or university in CAR to be the centers of activities for the IPs;
3. Holding of a series of seminars to be spearheaded by Congressional Houses or Governors' Offices or Mayors' Offices on IPs concerns; and
4. Information drives on IPs concerns and aspirations.

These certainly are very high targets, but as a dreamer, might as well we aim at the top so that when our arrows fail to sour the skies hopefully shall land at the middle.

The Igorot Global Organization Consultation Agenda accentuates the significance of bonding together all ethno groups in the Cordillera to adopt an action in order to have a voice in CAR and ultimately a voice in the nation. This should be the challenge of the 7<sup>th</sup> International Consultation Agenda, to make us listen and to think more carefully about our region, about the tribe where each of us trace our roots and to also include therein, the geographical places that we occupy. By opening our minds to fresh insights on the concerns of our people, the Igorot Global Organization will make us more responsive denizens of our subgroups and of the Global Cordillera Community and will help win for all, **a more progressive and dynamic future not only for ourselves but for our own people.** God bless you.