

## **Account of The Launch**

Jubilee Room, House of Commons, London  
London 25<sup>th</sup> January 2007

### **Fact Finding Mission Report *Mining in the Philippines: Concerns and Conflicts***

The Report which addresses issues of the Fact Finding Mission to the Philippines, was conducted in July/August 2006 by Clare Short MP, Clive Wicks member of the CEESP of IUCN, Fr Frank Nally Missionary Society of St. Columban and Chair of Philippine Indigenous Peoples Links (PIPLinks), and Cathal Doyle of the Irish Centre for Human Rights, National University of Ireland Galway.

The meeting to launch the Fact Finding Mission (FFM) report, "Mining in the Philippines Concerns and Conflicts", took place in the Jubilee Room of the ancient buildings of the Houses of Parliament in London 25 January. The meeting was hosted and Chaired by Clare Short MP (a member of the Parliament and former Cabinet Minister for Overseas Development.)

She said in her opening remarks that though she had visited many countries in the past that face severe development problems she had never seen anything so disturbing in its capacity for systematic destruction as in the Philippines. She also reported on the climate of intimidation and palpable fear among those who bravely stood up for the defence of their communities. She expressed her admiration for the leaders of the Catholic church in the Philippines for standing so clearly and firmly in solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples and other poor affected communities. She stressed that the situation was serious and said it cried out for action in solidarity from the International Catholic community and others. Ms. Short in particular drew attention to the very substantial role the City of London has in financing mining around the world, including the Philippines, and the existing involvement, in the Philippines, of a number of companies with a British base of operations. She pledged to continue working to inform those in the City of the serious impacts of mining in support of the calls of the people the team met in the Philippines. And to campaign for the British Government, European Union and the World Bank to recognise the seriousness of the situation and act in a responsible manner to respect and support the calls of the affected communities.

A brief film from the Philippines was shown showing some of the impacts of mining. After which Clive Wicks, a member of the Fact Finding and also a member of the Commission on Environmental Economic and Social Policy of the World Conservation Union, presented the main findings of the report with the aid of a powerpoint presentation . (This is available on request and will be posted on websites including [www.piplinks.org](http://www.piplinks.org).)

Clive stressed his concern that the long term sustainability and the rich biological diversity of the Philippines were being compromised for, at best, short term gain driven in part by the problems of corruption. He said current mining plans would leave a legacy of impoverishment among many of what are already poor and marginalized Indigenous Peoples and poor farmers and fisherfolk. He illustrated the massive damage and destruction caused in the past by logging and the new and serious threat by widespread mining, particularly in critical watersheds. He urged the Government to give priority to sustainable development strategies and the protection of the livelihoods of the poorest and protection too of the country's invaluable and globally important biodiversity .

Mr Wicks urged the World Bank and the Philippine Government to revisit and implement the recommendations of the World Bank funded Extractive Industries Review (EIR) which in 2002 predicted problems relating to mining. He asserted that he and his commission were not against mining but were appalled by the current proposals for mining expansion in the Philippines. He said the FFM recommended the need for Strategic Environmental Appraisals on each of the major islands and regions considered for mining. He offered the help and cooperation of the team to the government if it sought to strengthen its capacity in this area as a requirement in the consideration of mining or other proposed developments that could affect environmental sustainability.

As an indication of the global nature of the problems caused by mining, Mr Wicks drew attention to a 2006 report from the USA that reported more than 70 % of US mines were failing to maintain defined levels for water quality and 96% of mines were defined as either causing or at risk of Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) impacts. In the Philippines at least 16 serious tailings dams incidents resulted in major pollution that has affected the Philippines in the last 20 years. He reported the widespread view within the scientific community that marine and riverine tailings disposal were irresponsible and environmentally damaging.

Cathal Doyle highlighted the Human Rights impacts of mining especially for indigenous peoples. He particularly highlighted the teams findings that, despite seemingly good provisions in the law, a failure of implementation and process at the site level and, the prevalence of intimidation and allegations of bribery and corrupt dealings, projects were being granted permission to proceed where it was abundantly clear that no Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC required by law) had been granted.

Fr Frank Nally made the concluding remarks. He and others from their experience at parish level in the Philippines highlighted the pattern of inequality, fear and corruption that barred indigenous and other poor peoples from access to justice and participation in decision making and called for international pressure and support for a clean up. The Chair reported to the meeting that Fr Frank had been barred recently from entry to the Philippines and deplored this action. (A protest letter has been prepared and endorsed by a wide range of groups and individuals in the Philippines and around the world. It will now be submitted.)

Statements of solidarity and concern from Bishop Z Jimenez and Senator Nene Pimentel were read out and contextualised by Romel Lingatoc, a Researcher and Lecturer at the University of Winchester and NCCP and Ed Garcia of International Alert.

An open forum and questions followed.

The participating audience included, Press representatives from the mining press, Filipinos based in the UK, Trade Union representation, Human Rights, Environmental and Corporate Social Responsibility and from the churches.

Questions raised the issue of British Involvement.

Clare Short stressed the commitment of the group to follow through on the report and ensure that the city of London and potential investors were fully informed of what is actually taking place on the ground in the Philippines. She stated that the report had been distributed in the UK and Philippines and follow up work would now begin. She invited members of several British based NGOs who expressed their alarm and concern to join the existing alliance working on this follow up campaign.

A member of the newly formed London Mining Network which seeks to work in support of communities and peoples globally affected by the impacts of mining companies, alerted people to the global nature of the problem, and expressed their support and encouraged further participation in future activities .

Several people who asked questions wanted to know what responses there was from companies and committed themselves to gather responses. Clare Short reported that the priority has been to produce an accurate and serious report of what they saw and were told so that the voices of the affected peoples could be heard and considered. And that the next steps will be to encourage all companies and financiers to behave responsibly.

Clare Short ended the meeting with the commitment "This is not a one off. We will continue to follow up on the report."

The various presentations from the meeting are available in electronic form.

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