

## **Acceptance Speech to Elinor Ostrom Award by Abdon Nababan**

It is tradition among us indigenous peoples to offer a greeting of gratitude to our ancestors, whose tremendous wisdom and commitment sustains us, generations to generations.

To them I dedicate this award acceptance.

As tonight is a reaffirmation of Indigenous Peoples as the rightful stewards of sources of life and living space, the commons.

*Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, my Brothers and Sisters,*

I must tell you that I did not know much about Elinor Ostrom before getting a notice that AMAN won the 2015 Award. To my knowledge, and I believe also to almost all of us in the leadership and management of AMAN, Prof. Ostrom is just one of many recipients of Nobel Prize in economics, that she had nothing to do with our struggle as indigenous peoples. Becoming this year award winner makes me very busy learning about Elinor Ostrom and her ideas and contributions.

I decided to attend the entire 15th Biennial Global Conference of the International Association for the Study of the Commons most specifically to become acquainted with the name Elinor Ostrom. I was enlightened with all presentations and discussions that lasted 3 days, in particular I was inspired by Heather Menzies keynote speech titled "Righting Relations with the Land and the Global Economy: Lessons from Our Ancestor on the Commons".

Now I realize that all this time, in our struggle full of blood and sweat in Indonesia, there is far away in the American continent an economics professor who is also fighting for the same rights, through intensive studies, not only with her mind but also with her heart, her testimony of taking the side of humanity and natural surroundings.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

To introduce, I represent and lead the indigenous peoples alliance, AMAN. And this award is not for me, nor is it just for the 1500+ AMAN organizers, but it is a tribute to the 2344 indigenous communities who have worked for nearly 17 years constantly, tirelessly, fighting together, at all levels, in the villages, in the respective communities, in the capitals of the district, provincial, national center, up to the international level.

This award honors the AMAN members who have been evicted from their land, criminalized, jailed, murdered for fighting for their indigenous rights to manage their "the commons", thus preventing open access and tragedy that we are facing now.

With thoughts of Elinor Ostrom, I wish to thank CIFOR who nominates AMAN for the award. Initially I did not understand why CIFOR would take risk to nominate AMAN for this prestigious award. Now I do understand! Once again thank you CIFOR!

*Ladies and Gentlemen, Brothers and Sisters,*

Elinor Ostrom believed that the tragedy of open access can be prevented if "the commons" is set and administered by the competent institutions, indigenous one. This exactly is AMAN's struggle. Indigenous communities were the sacred rights holders over their traditional territories, competent managers of this natural resources; indigenous peoples who have been made invisible by Indonesia's national law over the past 50 years.

Indigenous territories are seized through numerous national laws and the exclusion of collective rights by the state land and forest administration. Yet these rights are freely handed over to corporations who occupy tens of millions of hectares of land.... While the Government has legal authority over these area, it has never demonstrated competence and moral authority and legitimacy. In a situation of this type of access, it is the powerful who will win. And indigenous peoples in general to be the loser in the collusion of politicians, bureaucracy and corporations through the licensing regime.

Tragedy befalls upon people and earth when the commons is robbed and made into private cash machine property of some parties. When a few corporations are given control over forests, indigenous peoples are deprived of source of life and identity. When water is privatized, we are denied of a very basic right. When some groups of people claims God is theirs only, killings happen.

That's why,

During these 17 years tens of thousands of indigenous communities in Indonesia have joined the struggle to : "Reclaim the Commons", returning ancestral ownership to indigenous communities where young people can stay connected to their ancestors. In this regard we have to point out a milestone brought about by the Indonesian Constitutional Court ruling 2 years ago, MK 35, that customary forest is not state forest, its belong to indigenous peoples.

The commons is there so we can recognize ourselves, and we can care for sacred places. We are also building new economic models that are based on spirituality, culture and social solidarity of indigenous peoples. Strengthening cultural identity, legal and customary institutions are the next major work in indigenous communities.

This award is an encouragement for us to continue to fight, to reclaim "the commons", bring back "the commons" in the hand of "communities", guiding by our ancestors spirit for the "common good".

Friends,

Many of our elders tells me that it is increasingly urgent, at this critical moment in the life of the earth and mankind, of climate change, for the Indigenous peoples to speak up and tell the world to rectify our relations with the commons, that forests and seas be set and administered by us, the time proven competent indigenous peoples.

This is now our task. And I am so very happy tonight to have found a best ally and friend in taking this on, the Ellinor Ostrom.

Mauliate. Terimakasih. Thank you

Horas! Horas! Horas! May Creator and Ancestors be with us