

2014 National Native Title Conference Mabo Lecture Dr Wen-Chi Kung Lacking the “Mabo Wonder” But Still Striving For it: The Hard Struggle for Indigenous Self Government and Land Rights in Taiwan

This year's Mabo Lecture will be presented by Taiwanese Indigenous Leader Dr Wen-Chi Kung. The following provides a summary of his lecture which will be held on Tuesday 3 June at the Opening Plenary.

The speech starts with a brief introduction to Taiwan's Indigenous people, sketching

their demographics and geographical locations as well as their tribal distinctions. This is followed by a brief history of Taiwan's Indigenous people, which is deeply embedded with western and Japanese colonialism. It also discusses Indigenous policy development, highlighting the importance of the establishment of the Council of Indigenous Peoples in 1996, the sole government agency in the central government responsible for handling Indigenous affairs. Indigenous struggles for self-government and land rights have become two dominant issues in Taiwan through the past two decades. Therefore, the speech will focus on the following two major debates: One is about the strive for Indigenous self-government or autonomous regions and the government's reluctance to this appeal, the other concerns the problem of land rights. The discussion of the latter will focus on the conflicts between Indigenous claims for native title and the government's insistence on owning public land. Other problems and challenges confronting Indigenous peoples are also briefly discussed, including the effects of climate change on the Indigenous peoples and the inefficiency of administrative works. In a word, despite all the challenges and problems, there is still a silver lining, which lies in the concerted efforts of Indigenous peoples in Taiwan as well as the efficient coordination and cooperation between the government and the legislative body. For Taiwan's Indigenous peoples, native title, as promised by the Mabo Case for the Indigenous people of Australia, may not be fulfilled, but remains an ideal goal worthy of their hard and continuous

struggles now and for a long time to come.

TDr Wen-Chi Kung is a member of the Tayal tribe of Taiwan and an elected Member of the Legislative Yuan (National Parliament of Taiwan), a position he has held for three consecutive terms. During that time he has served as the Chairman in the Internal Affairs and Nationality Committee as well as in the Parliamentary Education and Culture Committee, and is currently the President of the 'Taiwan and Austronesian Island Countries Parliamentary Friendship Association'. Dr Wen-Chi Kung has for a long time been involved in advocating for recognition of the rights of indigenous Taiwanese. He has been the President of the "Taiwan Indigenous Survival and Development Association" since 2006, and has previously acted as Chairman of the Indigenous Peoples Commission for the Taipei City Government. Having received a Masters in Journalism from University of Oregon and a PhD in Social Sciences from Loughborough University in the United Kingdom, Dr Kung has held the post of Assistant Professor at a number of tertiary institutions, including National Dong Hwa University, Soochow University, Chaoyang University of Technology and Kaohsiung Ursuline Wenzao University of Languages, where he has taught Applied Foreign Language, Journalism and Communication Theories, and Ethnic and Minority Studies in Taiwan. His publications include, *Let My People Know* (1993, in Chinese), *Loyal to the Indigenous Taste: Indigenous Media, Culture and Politics* (2000, in Chinese), *Indigenous Peoples and the Press: A Study of Taiwan* (1997), and his doctoral thesis (reprinted in 2000), *Indigenous Appeal to God*.

