



DIRECTIVES FROM THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

A statement from members of indigenous peoples and local communities and participants in Communities Conserving Nature and Culture - a preparatory meeting for the World Parks Congress, Sydney 2014 (The Gully, Blue Mountains of NSW)

Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities & Conservation

The most effective way to support conservation by Indigenous peoples and local communities is the unconditional recognition, respect and guarantee of their collective and individual customary and legal rights - including to their lands, waters, natural resources, governance institutions, worldviews, knowledge, values and practices.

Shared governance must be based on free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

The reason biodiversity still exists in many parts of the world is because some indigenous and traditional knowledge and governance systems exist with it. Losing traditional knowledge and governance systems means losing biocultural diversity. It is of utmost importance to protect traditional knowledge and governance systems by recognising the right of self-determination of indigenous peoples and local communities.

Indigenous peoples and local communities from five continents, supported by civil society organisations from across the world, unite to declare and ensure that:

- Governments who have seized indigenous and community lands and waters for conservation purposes should restitute such lands and waters, including by honouring and respecting court rulings to return those lands to indigenous and community ownership.
- Extractive and other industrial-scale development projects are incompatible with protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, including the areas and territories conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities (ICCAs)- which include Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) in the Australian context- and other areas of cultural, ecological and spiritual importance; these projects should be stopped.
- Where governance of ICCAs and IPAs is under the jurisdiction of indigenous peoples and local communities, ownership and governance must include subsoil resources.
- Indigenous peoples and local communities, not states, should determine the categories of protected areas; in particular any area placed under a category that involves excluding human activity must be attributed by the community themselves, and not by other authorities or bodies as a way of excluding communities from their lands; strong safeguards should ensure

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that communities make the decisions, not other parties, and that no evictions take place from such areas.

- Traditional owners should be empowered to lead long-term governance and management of protected and other conservation areas.

IPAs

Indigenous Protected Areas are voluntarily established by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Traditional Owners and decision makers for their traditional land and sea Country. The right to manage and look after their estates is a requirement under their laws and customs. IPAs are recognised and supported through agreements with the Australian government IPA Programme and other partners to manage their Country as a protected area. They include management zones aligned with the IUCN categories and contribute to Australia's National Reserve System. Traditional Owners develop plans of management for their IPAs that set their vision and priorities for the future and invite partners to work alongside them to deliver on targets and manage threats.

ICCAs

There are as many names and realities for ICCAs as there are ICCAs themselves. ICCAs therefore:

- should be defined by the indigenous peoples and local communities themselves and never by external agencies.
- must be recognised and respected according to requests from the peoples or communities themselves, based on their self-determination and on the interconnectedness between nature and culture, values and livelihoods.
- should remind IUCN and governments of the importance of being inclusive of diverse forms of governance and management objectives, prompting a move away from conventional approaches to conservation and protected areas.

The Great Barrier Reef

The protection of the natural and cultural integrity of the Great Barrier Reef -- **the largest living organism on earth** -- must be ensured, including by their effective co-management by the Traditional Owners and the cessation of large-scale development, extractive industries and dumping of spoil that pose a threat to it.

Well-Being

Current models of 'development' are unsustainable and inequitable, and they entail the destruction of biodiversity and the territories and cultures of indigenous peoples and local communities. They are based on Western notions of progress that are materialist and consumerist in nature, commodifying and commercialising nature and human relationships, based on greed and ever-increasing accumulation, unsustainable industrial production, and control by the state and corporations.

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Fundamental changes are needed in pathways and models of wellbeing. These must learn from the worldviews and practices of Indigenous peoples and local communities, and several alternative movements around the world, which espouse principles and values such as the following:

- Nature is valuable in a holistic, integrated, intrinsic manner.
- There is respect for the rights of future generations and of the rest of nature.
- All processes and projects should have a long-term multi-generational perspective.
- Community is the centre of decision-making, economy, and society.
- Livelihoods and relationships should be secured.
- People should be free from deprivation and injustice.
- The economy should be based on solidarity, relationships of sharing and caring, happiness and satisfaction.
- Cultures of simplicity, 'enoughness' and intra/intergenerational equity are greatly valuable.
- Notions and measures of wellbeing should be local and not externally assessed.
- Localization and diversity can and should stand up to economic globalization and the homogenisation of cultures

Actions can include the following:

- Awareness campaigns especially amongst those who are not sensitive to these issues.
- Documentation and learning from, and rewarding, innovative alternative initiatives around the world.
- Incentives to further such initiatives, especially for the youth.
- Global solidarity for indigenous peoples and local communities and their territories threatened by mainstream development
- Indicators of wellbeing that include the above values, and not GDP.
- Promote ICCAs and IPAs as learning grounds for constructing models and practices of wellbeing that encompass the above values.

Intergenerational continuity and leadership

Traditional teachers are leading the way to self-determination instilling pride through language, culture and history, therefore ensuring economic and social stability.

We need to bring the youth to connect with culture and local language through integrating in curriculum or school system, job creation, policy directives, connecting with Elders and role models.

People need rights to decision-making on environment conservation, land management and ownership. They need jobs, work and community plans on environment and conservation.

This entails striving for:

- Community leadership to identify issues of concern
- Community engagement with government and agencies
- Self-determination: community need to be engaged without being imposed upon
- Building of culture, vision, leadership
- Governance and management of community land