

Plenary Statement On UNPFII Agenda Item 8
“Indigenous Peoples’ Collective Rights to lands, territories and natural resources”
by
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Madame Chair, Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum, Elders of Prestige, women and youth leaders from the world’s tribes, Fellow Delegates:

I am making this statement on behalf of the ICCA Consortium—an international association comprising 120 Member organizations that represent indigenous peoples, local communities and supporters from 75 countries in all regions of the world.

We understand ICCAs as “**territories of life,**” in view of their being conserved by their custodian indigenous peoples and local communities as **invaluable heritage**. For many indigenous peoples, these coincide with the entirety of their territory. For others, they are the vital elements of such territories, for example watersheds, sacred groves, springs and the habitats of totem animals. For all indigenous peoples, however, **they are identity and culture, livelihoods and self-determination**.

In our **ICCAs—territories of life**, indigenous peoples develop self-rules, customary laws and the capacity to adapt to change. Their culture and institutions emerge from the practice of **ICCA governance and management**, which resulted in the positive conservation of nature, sustenance of livelihoods and for the continuation of life as peoples.

Madame Chair, this Forum needs to **celebrate ICCAs-- territories of life** as the **demonstrated capacity of indigenous peoples to maintain alive the great part of our planet’s biological and cultural diversity**. It is from this demonstrated capacity that stem the evidence and meaning of our territorial rights and obligations.

The ICCA Consortium recommends that the Forum - as well as other UN instruments such as CBD, UNFCCC and the Sustainable Development Goals - highlight **ICCAs—territories of life** as **essential to the planet**, and deserving much better recognition and support by state governments and other actors. The custodian indigenous peoples should be actively supported to **maintain their livelihoods in accordance with their customary conservation laws and practices**. We urge states to support customary institutions protecting ICCAs, especially when they assert their rights against destructive development. The defenders of ICCAs-territories of life should be given utmost protection and security of justice instead of being criminalized.

Madam Chair, the ICCA Consortium recommends that the Forum - as well as other UN instruments such as CBD, UNFCCC and the Sustainable Development Goals - support **ICCAs-territories of life** by strengthening the **security of governance of their custodian indigenous peoples**—including by formal **collective title and/or by other appropriate recognition of their inviolable collective rights and responsibilities**.

