

Indigenous Peoples and Conservation

Statement by the ICCA Consortium to the 17th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,
on Agenda Item 12 - United Nations Headquarter, 19 April 2018

Madam Chairperson, Honourable fellow delegates,

What is conservation? There are two answers:

One. “Fortress” conservation: What governments and the private sector do when displacing us or diminishing our rights for their objectives. **In this sense, we are certainly not conservationists!”**

Two. Indigenous conservation: What we Indigenous Peoples have done throughout time— conserving nature and resources in order to sustain ourselves. **In this sense we, indigenous peoples, are the original conservationists!”**

While the first approach is a legacy of colonialism and ignores the historic role of indigenous peoples and traditional communities, the second is effective and respectful. It allows us to maintain our surroundings as “**territories of life**”-- “*umbilical forests*”, sacred lakes, vital migratory routes, *hima, agdal, qoroq, territorios de buen vivir...* There are as many names as there are languages, and as many management approaches—from seasonal migration to rotational farming. There are also innumerable governance institutions— from committees of elders to village assemblies-- that have kept alive these jewels of bio-cultural diversity around the world, our source of identity, culture, spiritual wealth, livelihoods, resilience and pride. All indigenous peoples and traditional societies engage in this sort of conservation. If some did not, they are not around to tell us.

Madam Chairperson, our “territories of life” are estimated to cover 25 to 50 percent of landscapes in the world—well beyond the Convention on Biological Diversity’s total coverage target for 2020. Through agreements with UN agencies, **our peer-reviewed territories of life can be internationally registered as “ICCA” and properly recognised and supported**, if and when desired by their custodian peoples. We recommend that Parties to the CBD **urgently address situations of protected areas overlapping with our territories of life**, and **prevent destructive developments by a strict application of our right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent**. We recommend that the Global Environment Facility and other donors – including as part of their commitments for the Sustainable Development Goals -- **assist the custodians of territories of life as they strengthen themselves, including via participatory mapping, community protocols, “plans of life”, networks and alliances**.

Madam Chairperson, the ICCA Consortium is dedicated to supporting territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities, in short “ICCAs”. We have been advocating for recognition of these territories in IUCN and the CBD for more than 15 years, and were formally requested by CBD Parties to help prepare guidelines on their proper recognition and support. We express our formal interest in working with the Permanent Forum on matters of conservation and indigenous peoples’ rights, and **recommend that the Permanent Forum specifically include the topic of ICCAs—territories of life—in its continuing work and in the mandated area of “Environment”**.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson and honourable delegates, and Thanks also for the excellent report on conservation and indigenous human rights prepared for this session by the Forum Secretariat.