

## **Parties adopt “landmark” recommendation on protected areas and OECMs – now the hard work begins**

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Although the term “other effective area-based conservation measures” (OECMs) has been in the CBD since the 2010 adoption of the Aichi Targets, Parties are finally grappling with its meaning and implications. During SBSTTA-22’s consideration of protected areas and OECMs, several delegates seemed happily surprised by its relatively progressive content and the constructive nature of the negotiations. Perhaps this is because the clock to meet the 2020 Targets is ticking ever louder and Parties know they need common guidance on OECMs. But perhaps it also represents a high-water mark for Parties’ agreement to date on key issues such as governance, equity and the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities in the context of protected areas and conservation measures – most notably in Annexes II, III and IV.

Particularly in light of historical and continuing injustices, protected areas frameworks are often not an appropriate way to recognise and support territories and areas governed, managed and conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities. For example, the Community Conservation Resilience Initiative<sup>1</sup> identified top-down, exclusionary and militarised approaches to protected areas as a major threat to biodiversity as they undermine the peoples and communities who are most invested in protecting biodiversity. Subject to important caveats, now that we are close to having an adopted definition and related guidance on OECMs, OECM-related frameworks could offer an opportunity to strengthen appropriate recognition and support for such territories and areas and related community conservation initiatives.<sup>2</sup>

Although the adoption of strong text is just the one step in the long journey towards implementation, we are by no means starting from scratch. Indigenous peoples, local communities, women and grassroots organisations around the world have been working on issues of governance, equity and rights for many years and have made crucial advances for conservation – sometimes against all odds. We urge Parties and other relevant organisations to take the time to sit with, listen to and learn from them in collaborative efforts to implement this forthcoming decision and meet the Aichi Targets, taking into account recent reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment.<sup>3</sup>

Here in Canada, for example, Indigenous peoples are showing extraordinary leadership both within and beyond the Pathway to Canada Target 1 process, including by

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see: <https://globalforestcoalition.org/resources/supporting-community-conservation>.

<sup>2</sup> Jonas, H.D., E. Lee, H.C. Jonas, C. Matallan-Tobon, K. Sander-Wright, F. Nelson and E. Enns, 2017. “Will ‘other effective area-based conservation measures’ increase recognition and support for ICCAs?” *PARKS* 23.2: 63-78. Available online at: <https://bit.ly/2jzKN8H>.

<sup>3</sup> CBD/SBSTTA/22/L.2, para. 5. See 2016 report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples ([A/71/229](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/2016/07/57912012.html)); 2017 report of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and environment ([A/HRC/34/49](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/2017/07/59712012.html)).

challenging dominant narratives on the conservation and protection of nature and by creating an ethical space for engagement of Indigenous and Western knowledge systems. This work could contribute not only to reconciliation among Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians but also to reconciliation with Mother Earth.<sup>4</sup>

We appreciate the collaborative spirit in which Parties negotiated and adopted this draft recommendation and the positive outcomes it should have when fully and effectively implemented – particularly for Indigenous peoples, local communities and grassroots organisations on the frontlines of biodiversity conservation.

As Parties contemplate how to implement this recommendation and how to address OECMs in their forthcoming sixth national reports, we urge them to engage with Indigenous peoples, local communities and civil society with open hearts and minds. Although much work remains to be done by 2020, we are much more likely to meet the Targets if we do so in the spirit of reconciliation with each other and with the planet on which we all depend.

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The IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas has just released a special issue of its peer-reviewed journal *PARKS: The International Journal of Protected Areas and Conservation*, focusing on OECMs. After an editorial essay giving an overview of IUCN's process to develop guidance on OECMs, the special issue includes eight case studies of potential OECMs. It is available for download in English at: <http://parksjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/PARKS-24-SI-HiResWeb.pdf>.

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<sup>4</sup> Reports of Pathway to Canada Target 1 (online at: [www.conservation2020canada.ca/home](http://www.conservation2020canada.ca/home)) include: *We Rise Together: Achieving Pathway to Canada Target 1 through the creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in the spirit and practice of reconciliation*, the Indigenous Circle of Experts' Report and Recommendations; and *Canada's Conservation Vision: A report of the National Advisory Panel*.