**STATEMENT: Ministerial Dialogue and Pledging Session for the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF)**

*4:30 – 7:00 PM, GRULAC Room, COP 16 Venue, Cali, Colombia*

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*By*

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Greetings and a pleasant day to everyone.

Your Excellencies, Madam Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary of the CBD

Señora Maria Muhamad Gonzales, COP 16 Presidency;

Ms. Valerie Hickey, Global Director for Environment, World Bank;

Mr. Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, CEO and Chairperson, GEF;

Distinguished Ministers, illustrious friends from the Diplomatic Community here at COP 16;

To council member-representatives of the Global Environment Facility Framework Fund; and,

To the Global Environment Facility secretariat that set up this event.

I speak with trepidation finding myself the only Indigenous Person invited here today. And I divest myself of any pretense to a superior understanding of our expert friends and partners who are more immersed than I, in the intricacies of finance. Yet, I too, like my fellow indigenous compatriots, in and outside of IPAG, submit to the need for transformational change and game changing rules to avoid losing further ground, or generating only the same paltry achievements in global biodiversity conservation goals in the short years before 20130. The “business as usual” approaches are failing us. The required shift includes **Direct Access to Finance** for Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations (IPOs), IP networks and their communities, as well as institutions that indigenous peoples identify as their **intermediaries** to manage the funds for them as Fiscal Sponsors in line with their right to self-determination.

Doing so addresses the yawning gap between high biodiversity levels of indigenous-managed lands and CBD Parties’ far too meager progress on biodiversity targets. Indigenous peoples’ historical and current situation show an unmatched role in the protection of biodiversity. As front-liners in environmental protection, indigenous peoples anticipate greater layers of support for effective and inclusive response to rapid biodiversity degradation and intensifying climate loss and damage.

This past week, we heard from CoP 16 delegates - from state parties and non-state actors - as they shared insights and analysis of the state of funding for biodiversity. They also heard reflections from indigenous peoples and local communities, whose roles are central to the achievement of the Global Biodiversity Framework, I quote GEF CEO Carlos Manuel Rodriguez in a conversation I had with him during the 7th GEF General Assembly in Vancouver last year.

He said: **“Aligning the GBFF with the role of indigenous peoples is SMART.”**

 ***Above.*** *Amplifying the disproportionate development aid and Indigenous Peoples’ role in sustainable biodiversity.*

From our perspective, the CEO’s statement amplifies three certainties:

First, “**Living in harmony with nature”** is a goal the global community seeks to realize by 2050, has long been a lifestyle of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The spiritual and cultural values Indigenous Peoples and local communities attach over land and resources have resulted in today’s protection of over a quarter of the earth’s land, and contributing 37% of the planet’s remaining natural areas including 60% of all land mammals having more than 10% of their habitats within indigenous lands. ***But for how long?*** How can we sustain this without appropriate support?

Second, findings by multiple science and policy groups affirms that indigenous Peoples and Local Communities provide enormous contribution in biodiversity conservation, yet receive the least in development aid! Current financial architecture stands in glaring contrast to these roles in biodiversity conservation. ***Much current biodiversity and climate finance do not reach Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities***. **This has to change**. Financing the GBFF necessitates DONOR RECOGNITION of the need for such change, and to ***consult and cooperate*** with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, to align GBFF with our rights and roles.

Third, Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs) with experience in implementing small, medium and large-scale projects are capable of providing improvements to current funding contexts and tackling systemic barriers. Among these are complex, bureaucratic and *inflexible donor requirements* and their international *intermediaries* not known to Indigenous Peoples and local communities. These are perceived as obstacles to accessing funds. Alternative models and mechanisms can enable more funding to be channeled to Indigenous People and local communities on fair and fit-for-purpose terms.

Given the GBFF’s high potential for transformational impact on the funding situation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, it can create a PIVOTAL partnership shift a donor-beneficiary relationship to one that treats Indigenous Peoples and local communities as ***PARTNERS, and NOT as beneficiaries***.

These transformations – while ambitious – are not “new.” WE have experience and lessons to guide us. This pivotal partnership model has already been proven under a GEF-funded Philippine ICCA Project. In this model, the donor- Indigenous Peoples nexus was built on TRUST and belief in the capacity of indigenous peoples and local communities in decision making with technical and facilitative support from implementing partners. Result? A Large-Scale Project, with Medium Scale Project Budget exceeded project targets, and pushed the Philippines to the forefront of inclusive conservation for Asia. It was later, designated as “Global Best Practice” at the 7th GEF General Assembly.

Finally, I make the following recommendations for GBFF considerations:

1. ***To establish a Dedicated window for indigenous peoples and local communities***, with less-stringent, more flexible RULES especially where disasters and changes in contexts occur. Indigenous Traditional Territories at present are biodiversity hotspots and are critical carbon sinks. The Philippine archipelago, as a case in point, with its 7 million hectares of indigenous peoples’ traditional territory, from a total land area of 30 Million hectares harbors more diversity of life than any other country on earth ON A PER HECTARE BASIS. The same is true for Madagascar. The two countries are the world’s top biodiversity hotspots, demonstrating effectiveness of indigenous peoples and local communities as protectors of ecosystems crucial in combatting climate change and biodiversity loss. Yet the two are chronically underfunded, reflecting persistence of small portions of funds and limited resources reaching the ground and leaving Indigenous Peoples and local communities at risk, making it impossible to defend territories and reach global goals;

Powerful examples of direct support for indigenous peoples and local communities can be found in UK-based Synchronicity Earth addressing Nature, Climate and Energy in Biodiversity Hotspots, and the Asia-based Indigenous Peoples of Asia Solidarity Fund (IPAS Fund) providing support for 13 Asian countries. Direct funding is not about money as such, but about impact.

1. That the ***20% of the GBFF designated for indigenous peoples and local communities***, provide finance for actions that they identify and prioritize including through their representative Institutions following proven “Best Practice” models;
2. Explore additional, pivotal roles in the GBFF through **ACCREDITATION** of organizations, bodies and networks managed by Indigenous Peoples and local communities to reach global goals through a more rapid shift from ***“extractive-based economy”*** to “***regenerative economy***,” utilizing rights-based approach consistent with the Global Biodiversity Framework policy on prioritizing Indigenous Peoples and local communities; and,
3. Include Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the governance of GBFF and funding bodies or mechanisms established in their name, and in implementation of conservation projects through their leadership, and with genuine ***Free, Prior and Informed Consent***.

I end with additional thought to the GEF CEO’s statement - that “aligning the GBFF with the role of Indigenous peoples is smart“ is NOT A NON-GUT issue for us. In the context of finance, it signals an opportunity for a pivotal alliance between the force of multilateralism with leadership of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. However, such an alliance must be firmly grounded in recognition and respect for our rights, including over our traditional knowledge systems shaped by generations of practice and a peoples’ journey for millennia, in order for transformational impacts at scale to occur - benefiting both people and planet, and promoting a just and livable future.

***May the GBFF be known and remembered as having shaped Direct Access to Funding with the wisdom of an indigenous elder, the industry of an entrepreneur, the zeal of an economist, and the conscience of an ecologist.***

I Thank You.