ICCA Consortium Statement: 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the Convention on Biological Diversity

Statement by the ICCA Consortium to the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Yerevan, Armenia

ICCAs–territories of life are territories and areas where Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities have deep historical, cultural, and spiritual relationships with nature, exercise collective governance through their own institutions, and contribute to the conservation of biological and cultural diversity, livelihoods, and community well-being. They are living territories, sustained through generations of collective rights, responsibilities, knowledge, practices, and care for nature.

The ICCA Consortium is a global membership-based association and solidarity movement bringing together Indigenous Peoples, community custodians of territories of life, and their supporters. Guided by our Manifesto for territories of life, we work towards a world where territories of life and their custodians thrive through self-determination, recognition of their collective rights and responsibilities, and the well-being of all beings.

At CBD COP17, we, the ICCA Consortium, reaffirm that the vision of living in harmony with nature cannot be achieved without recognizing, respecting, and supporting ICCAs–territories of life and their custodian Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF) has provided an important opportunity, but its implementation must bring meaningful changes to conservation policies, practices, and the relationship between people and nature at all levels.

The first Global Review sends a clear warning: despite unprecedented global engagement, collective progress under the KM-GBF remains uneven and insufficient to achieve its 2030 targets.

The KM-GBF already provides a transformative direction, including through Section C. The question is whether Parties will implement that vision or allow it to remain a promise on paper. Section C must be the test of implementation, reporting, and accountability—not an optional safeguard. It requires the Framework to respect the rights, knowledge, and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), including through free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) and their full and effective participation.

The ICCA Consortium calls on Parties to translate this commitment into action across the following five connected priorities:

First, recognize territories of life, secure collective tenure, and respect customary governance. Implementation of Target 3 must go beyond counting hectares towards 30×30. Parties must separately identify, recognize, and report Indigenous and Traditional Territories (ITTs), including ICCAs–territories of life, as a distinct category, making their contributions, governance systems, and custodians visible in the monitoring framework. These must include those ITTs and ICCAs–territories of life that are overlapped by protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) without their FPIC. Target 3 must be implemented in conjunction with Target 22.

Second, transform biodiversity finance and align economic and fiscal systems with the KM-GBF. Negotiations on resource mobilization and the financial mechanism must go beyond raising new funds. Parties must implement Targets 14 and 18 by mainstreaming biodiversity across economic, fiscal, and development policies, and eliminating, phasing out, or reforming harmful subsidies and financial flows. Public budgets, investment, and development policies must no longer finance activities that drive biodiversity loss, undermine collective tenure, or threaten ICCAs–territories of life. At the same time, Target 19 must deliver adequate, predictable, accessible, and sustained resources, including direct finance for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and their community-led conservation initiatives.

Third, defend data sovereignty and epistemic justice. Implement Article 8(j) and ensure that KM-GBF implementation approaches, including digital sequence information on genetic resources, synthetic biology, and emerging technologies, do not enable the extraction of community knowledge and resources without consent, recognition, and fair and equitable benefit-sharing in relation to both primary and secondary use.

Fourth, ensure the effective implementation of Target 22 on participation, access to justice, and human rights. Parties must guarantee the full, equitable, inclusive, effective, and gender-responsive participation of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in biodiversity-related decision-making, ensure access to information and justice, and uphold their rights over lands, territories, resources, and traditional knowledge. This requires: a. Ending criminalization,

violence, and impunity against custodian Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities; b. Ensuring effective grievance redress mechanisms for rights violations, which is essential for ensuring justice; and c. Providing full protection for environmental human rights defenders.

Fifth, confront the interconnected climate and biodiversity crises. Through the review of work programs on forests, protected areas, marine and coastal biodiversity, and agriculture, address the underlying drivers of destruction of biodiversity. Climate and biodiversity action must not legitimize dispossession or reproduce harmful development models impacting ICCAs–territories of life.

The ICCA Consortium calls for COP17 to turn the Global Review into corrective action. Parties must be held accountable not only for hectares protected or resources mobilized, but for whether rights are upheld, governance is respected, communities are safe, biological and cultural diversity is effectively protected, and human and more-than-human relations are positively strengthened and nourished.

We welcome, and also draw the attention of the Parties to, the adoption of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Resolution 136 (2025), recognizing the crucial conservation role of territories of life and their custodians and calling for concrete measures of recognition, support, and restorative justice.

Finally, the success of the KM-GBF cannot be measured by area-based targets alone. It must also be measured based on whether Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities can continue to govern, care for, and sustain their territories of life, exercising their collective rights and responsibilities for present and future generations. Recognizing territories of life means recognizing their custodians, their governance systems, and their right to determine their own futures.