

**International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change  
Foro Internacional de los Pueblos Indígenas sobre Cambio Climático**

**IIPFCC Policy Paper on Climate Change<sup>i</sup>**

*Mother Earth is no longer in a period of climate change, but in climate crisis. ....Indigenous Peoples have a vital role in defending and healing Mother Earth. We uphold that the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples ... must be fully respected in all decision-making processes and activities related to climate change.*

*- Anchorage Declaration<sup>ii</sup>*

**Climate Change calls for historic transformations**

1. Climate change, in the light of the current global financial, economic, environmental and food crises, represents an unprecedented challenge and opportunity for humanity to transform global economic, political, social, cultural relations to live in balance with Mother Earth. Reaching climate equilibrium and justice is inseparable from acknowledging the historical responsibilities of developed countries while promoting social equity between and within nations, maintaining ecological integrity, addressing the climate and ecological debt, and pursuing an effective transition away from fossil fuel dependency towards a green economy. It requires honouring international commitments to poverty eradication, sustainable development, biodiversity, and human rights. The full and effective participation of indigenous peoples, local communities and vulnerable groups is key to achieve a just and equitable outcome of the climate negotiations.
2. Climate science, indigenous and traditional knowledge, international solidarity, equity and human rights, widespread social mobilisation and strong political leadership, are all building blocks towards desirable outcomes in Copenhagen and beyond.
3. Climate change governance must transcend state-governments' negotiations, to recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples which includes the full and effective participation in all negotiations by Indigenous Peoples' traditional governments, institutions and organizations. It must also embrace diverse contributions and inter-cultural collaboration, recognizing distinct and valuable contributions from children and youth, women, indigenous peoples and local communities. All voices need to be included in climate governance and decision-making: we are all learners and teachers together in addressing human-induced climate change.

**Indigenous Peoples are Rights-holders**

4. We hold inalienable collective rights over our lands, territories and resources. Policies and actions that are being negotiated now directly affect our traditional lands, territories, oceans, waters, ice, flora, fauna and forests thereby also affecting the survival and livelihoods of over 370 million Indigenous Peoples from all regions of the globe. However, our concerns and views have not been seriously addressed in the climate negotiation processes, least of all those from indigenous women and youth. We reiterate the States' and whole UN system's obligations to uphold regional and international human rights commitments and standards, especially the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The provisions of the UNDRIP articulate rights which must be respected and safeguarded

in all climate decision-making and actions. We are therefore holders of collective rights, including sovereign and inherent rights to land and treaty rights, covenants and agreements. Protecting these rights also strengthen the capacity and resilience of indigenous peoples and local communities to respond to climate change.

5. Respect for the human rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, valuing our traditional knowledge and innovations, and supporting our local mitigation and adaptation strategies are critical and invaluable requirements towards adequate holistic solutions to climate change. As such, our local strategies and priorities must be reflected in National Adaptation and Mitigation Action (NAMAs) and National Adaptation Plans and strategies of Action (NAMAs and NAPAs), in the development and implementation of which we must participate fully and effectively. The distinct roles and responsibilities of indigenous women and youth, will need to be considered; underlining the importance of their inclusion in decision-making and planning processes.

6. Our rights to self-determination and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) are the minimum standards to safeguard our rights and interests through the different stages of the project lifecycle, including policy framing, planning and design, implementation, restoration, rehabilitation, benefit-sharing and conflict resolution.

7. Our governing bodies have the right to enact such laws and regulations as appropriate and adopt mitigation and adaptation plans within their jurisdictional authority as they deem necessary to protect and advance the social, economic, political and cultural welfare of their communities in matters pertaining to climate change. Each indigenous people's governing body has the prerogative to determine and apply the best available science, including native sciences and conventional sciences, according to their cultural requirements consistent with the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.

### **Indigenous Peoples' Contributions to Ecosystem-based Mitigation and Adaptation**

8. We have intrinsic contributions towards addressing the climate crisis, and renewing the relationships between humans and nature. For generations, we have managed ecosystems nurturing its integrity and complexity in sustainable and culturally diverse ways. Our customary resource management systems have proven to be ecologically sustainable, low carbon economies. These include mobile pastoralism in drylands and rangelands, rotational swidden agriculture and ecological agriculture in tropical forest regions, the conservation, management and restoration of other natural ecosystems such as mangroves, savannahs, wetlands, the Arctic environment and small island ecosystems. Traditional knowledge, innovations and adaptation practices embody local adaptative management to the changing environment, and complement scientific research, observations and monitoring.

9. The climate crisis threatens our very survival, particularly forest-dependent, ice-dependent peoples, peoples in voluntary isolation, and the indigenous peoples of small island states and local communities. Addressing such vulnerabilities requires recognition, respect and strengthening of the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples, and strengthening the resilience of ecosystems and Indigenous Peoples and local communities' capacities to adapt to climate change. Ecosystem-based adaptation based on holistic indigenous peoples' systems and rights can deliver significant social, cultural, spiritual and economic values to Indigenous Peoples and local communities as well as to the biodiversity of indigenous lands and territories. This should be considered with the full participation of indigenous peoples in the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these

measures. The empowerment of Indigenous peoples and local communities is critical to successful adaptation strategies to climate change.

10. Our cosmology, ways of life and traditional practices have been in existence since time immemorial. Sumak Kawsay, Penker Pujustin and other indigenous visions and values propose a way of life that is respectful, responsible, balanced and harmonious with nature and offers equity and solidarity as the guiding principles of global wellbeing. Indigenous worldviews embody an organized, sustainable and dynamic economic system, as well as political, socio-cultural and environmental rights. This vindicates a social dimension of democracy that goes beyond formal democracy, where economy becomes a subordinate activity to the development of peoples in the name of humanity, solidarity and respect for Mother Earth.

### **Securing Indigenous Peoples' Territories**

11. The global economic transition to sustainable, low carbon development will require revitalization of diverse local economies, including support for Indigenous peoples' self-determined development. Economic planning combined with adaptive management to climate change will need to apply an ecosystem-based approach, and must fully respect the rights and interests of indigenous peoples and local communities. Securing our rights to our ancestral lands, forests, waters and resources, provides the basis for sustainable local social, cultural, spiritual and economic development, and some insurance against our vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. This is also beneficial towards improving ecosystem governance, ecosystem resilience and the delivery of ecosystem services.

12. Many forests are within the traditional lands and territories of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous peoples around the world live in and depend upon forests for their survival and to enjoy their fundamental rights to forests and land tenure. They are of cultural, social, economic and spiritual significance for us and provide benefits for humankind. Accordingly, the rights of Indigenous peoples, including our land and resource rights, must be recognized and respected at all levels (local, national and international) before we can consider REDD initiatives and projects. The recognition of our rights must be in accordance with international human rights law and standards including the UNDRIP and ILO Convention 169, among other human rights instruments. If there is no full recognition and full protection for Indigenous peoples' rights, including the rights to resources, lands and territories, and there is no recognition and respect of our rights of free, prior and informed consent of the affected indigenous peoples, we will oppose REDD and REDD+ and carbon offsetting projects, including CDM projects. All decision-making processes on REDD and REDD+, Clean Development Mechanism, Land Use and Land Use Change and Forests (LULUCF), Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) as well as other ecosystem-based mitigation and adaptation measures and projects must be conditional to the free prior informed consent of Indigenous peoples.

13. Our laws, regulations, and plans shall be recognized as authoritative and determinative as to the risks, values and benefits associated with measures to adapt to, or mitigate for, climate change effects within the territorial jurisdiction of tribal governing bodies.

The IIPFCC affirms our global unity and solidarity to realize the enjoyment of our collective rights and the recognition of our vision, indigenous knowledge and our contributions in solving the climate change crisis.

- i This policy paper was discussed and finalized at the IIPFCC meeting in Bangkok, Thailand from September 26-27, 2009.
- ii Indigenous Peoples Global Summit on Climate Change