Year in Review

For the Commission Specialist Group on Indigenous Peoples, Customary & Environmental Laws and Human Rights (SPICEH) there have been several key outcomes in 2014 including: (a) work around the Mesoamerican Parks Congress (March 2014) and organizing of Stream 7 of the World Parks Congress (November 2014), (b) the Natural Resource Governance Framework and analysis of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the necessary framework for Conservation with Indigenous Peoples (Draft Guide on Conservation and Indigenous Peoples in Mesoamerica), (c) contributions to ongoing discussions on Indigenous Peoples’ Membership in IUCN, and (d) continue to contribute to the discussion and analysis of a rights based approach to conservation.

The Specialist Group, at its core, has a focus to deepen awareness, provide analysis, and offer recommendations for conservation that take into account indigenous peoples’ distinct human rights as it relates to their environment, lands, territories, and natural resources. For indigenous peoples, their human rights are not separate from their lands and environment, therefore environmental and human rights must be fully integrated in all aspects of work. The emphasis of the Specialist Group has been to contribute in the development of improved conservation practices with indigenous peoples based on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) and linking it to existing IUCN commitments and mandates to ensure concrete recommendations for a rights based approach with specific emphasis on indigenous peoples' human rights within conservation.

The Specialist Group holds several key substantive rights at the center for improving all other rights such as, (1) self-determination and self-government, (2) collective rights, and (3) sovereignty. Indigenous peoples and indigenous leaders have worked for more than 30 years at the United Nations for recognition as sovereign nations and governments. Indigenous peoples have and continue to fight for the right to collectively manage, control, use and own their lands, territories, natural resources and environment. Many indigenous leaders have and continue to sacrifice their lives for these core rights, and for the right to protect their environment from all threats, including potential projects under conservation initiatives.

Areas of growth from the last year remain focused on generating a structure between CEESP and WCEL around the joint commission structure and work programme, regular communication between both Commissions and identifying individuals that can link and contribute to both CEESP and WCEL goals and objectives.

Goals

1. Implementation of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
2. Substantiative Rights to ground all other rights
3. Developing the Rights-Based Approach to conservation