



Strengthen the participation of indigenous peoples at the United Nations based on the recognition of their own identity

Sixteenth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)
New York City, 24th April to 5th May 2017

Item 11: Follow-up to the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples:
(b) Ways to enhance the participation of indigenous peoples at the United Nations

Delivered by:
Mr Gonzalo Oviedo
IUCN Senior Adviser on Social Policy

Madam Chair, distinguished members of the UNPFII, distinguished participants,

I would like to speak about the point concerning "Ways to enhance the participation of indigenous peoples at the United Nations".

At its Sixth World Conservation Congress, celebrated in September 2016 in Hawai'i, the Members of IUCN adopted 13 Resolutions on indigenous peoples on a number of issues. Particularly important was the adoption of a Resolution creating a new category of IUCN Members specifically for indigenous peoples' organizations. This is a historic development for IUCN, and also for the conservation movement, and a potentially useful example for the United Nations.

Since its inception, IUCN has had two categories of voting Members: Members from governments and Members from civil society. Indigenous peoples' organizations were included in this second category, generally referred to as "non-governmental organizations". For a long time indigenous organizations expressed their discomfort with this structure, as it did not recognize their identity and character, which differentiate them fundamentally from other entities of civil society.

After a long process, IUCN Members decided to modify the institution's statutes to create a new category of Members called "Indigenous Peoples' Organizations", which comprises organizations which identify themselves as such and recognizes their particular characteristics. I would like to emphasize that this is the first time IUCN has reformed its membership structure, and has done so specifically to meet the demands of indigenous peoples' organizations. With this change, IUCN hopes to integrate many more indigenous organizations as Members, which will increase their influence on the programme and the life of the institution.

This process of creating the new category of IUCN Members was long and complex, and still requires operational measures to deliver the expected results. We are already working on this together with our indigenous Members.

Permanent Observer Mission
For the International Union for
Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
to the United Nations
551 Fifth Avenue, Suites 800
A&B
New York, NY 10176
Tel. +1 212.346.1163

IUCN World Headquarters
Rue Mauverney 28
1196 Gland
Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 999 0000
Fax: +41 22 999 0002
mail@iucn.org
www.iucn.org

For more information, please
contact:

Gonzalo Oviedo
Senior Adviser, Social Policy
Gonzalo.oviedo@iucn.org

IUCN, the International Union
for Conservation of Nature,
helps the world find pragmatic
solutions to our most pressing
environment and development
challenges by supporting
scientific research; managing
field projects all over the
world; and bringing
governments, NGOs, the UN,
international conventions and
companies together to develop
policy, laws and best practice.

IUCN is the world's oldest and
largest global environmental
network. IUCN is a democratic
union with more than 1,000
government and NGO
member organizations, and
some 10,000 volunteer
scientists in more than 150
countries. IUCN's work is
supported by 1,100
professional staff in 62
countries and hundreds of
partners in public, NGO and
private sectors around the
world.

STATEMENT TO THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

It is important to highlight that at the same time other conservation organizations that are also Members of IUCN have taken similar steps, incorporating indigenous organizations, representatives and experts at various institutional levels.

Madam Chair,

Conservation organizations have gone through a long but important process to give more space to indigenous peoples within their actions and structures; but much remains to be done. In 1996, 21 years ago, the first policy statement of a conservation organization on the rights of indigenous peoples was adopted. This policy was based on the draft text of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that existed at that time. Since then, many changes have taken place in the sense of increasing the effective participation of indigenous peoples in

conservation actions, with full respect for their rights. I personally have had the privilege of being directly associated with many steps that have been taken in this process.

The implementation of these policies and measures still requires significant efforts, in particular to ensure that Governments, who have in their hands the conservation decisions, fully implement the provisions of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We hope to increase our joint work with indigenous peoples to this end, this time counting on indigenous organizations that are IUCN Members and who today feel empowered and strengthened through their new category to determine the direction of the work and the role of IUCN for the effective implementation of a new paradigm of conservation worldwide.

Thank you very much Madame Chair.