



Strengthen the application of UNDRIP in all environmental actions

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Item 4: Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Environment

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

I would like to speak about the area of the mandate of the UNPFII on the environment.

IUCN - International Union for the Conservation of Nature has the explicit mandate from its Members to integrate the provisions of UNDRIP into all components of its conservation programme. To this end, IUCN uses the full text of the Declaration as a parameter to examine the observance of the rights of indigenous peoples in its programme.

In addition, one of the first tasks we carried out in the organization to fulfil this mandate was to conduct a careful analysis of how the articles of UNDRIP relate to the IUCN programme. We found that there are 17 articles that provide a mandate or specific guidance applicable to the formulation and implementation of the programme and that we should particularly take into account.

Article 29.1 is the fundamental starting point for IUCN, since it states that "Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources". It is the first time that an international instrument recognizes that conservation of the environment is a right of peoples. While States are called upon by this article to establish and implement programmes of assistance to indigenous peoples to comply with it, this obligation extends to all non-state actors with conservation responsibilities.

For us, therefore, IUCN and all conservation organizations have the obligation to work to ensure the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of the lands or territories and resources of indigenous peoples.

Madam Chair:

Among the articles of UNDRIP to which IUCN pays especial attention are those on procedural issues, in particular on participation in decision-making, notably free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). We recognize that FPIC goes beyond procedural issues, because it relates to the right to self-determination, and for that reason it is the key principle that guides IUCN in the implementation of its programme on issues related to indigenous peoples.

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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

In order to ensure the implementation of UNDRIP in its conservation programme, IUCN has developed, among other tools, a system of safeguards that applies to all its projects, and is a rights-based system and in particular based on the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Other conservation organizations have taken similar steps, which is an important example of progress in environmental policy and practice in the 10 years since the adoption of UNDRIP. IUCN's proposal is that all actors in the environmental field, governmental and non-governmental, adopt an explicit and mandatory standard on the rights of indigenous peoples for their application to all their environmental conservation actions.

Madam Chair:

The major problem that remains today in this area relates to the rights of indigenous peoples to lands, territories and resources and to the restitution of these rights when they have been lost, as mandated by Articles 26, 27 and 28 of UNDRIP. This is an obligation of States, which unfortunately in many countries of the world it is still far from being fulfilled. IUCN and other conservation organizations will continue to promote the implementation of these articles, and to that end they will strengthen their partnership and collaboration with indigenous peoples' organizations, UNPFII and relevant mechanisms of the UN Human Rights Council.

Thank you Madam Chair.