



# **IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature Submission to the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

**New York City, 7<sup>th</sup>- 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012**

## **Strengthening IUCN’s approach to addressing indigenous peoples’ issues in conservation of nature and natural resources**

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) submits this report to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) to provide information on key 2011-2012 developments that further IUCN’s commitment to uphold and promote indigenous peoples’ rights in its global conservation work. These include: increased recognition and internal communication of the importance of indigenous peoples’ role and rights as they pertain to nature conservation and natural resource management for improved programme implementation; enabling and encouraging indigenous peoples’ organizations to join the Union to help guide approaches and actions to deliver its mandate; programmatic engagement to secure indigenous rights as related to establishment and management of World Heritage Sites and other protected areas; and ensuring that indigenous peoples’ issues are duly addressed at its World Conservation Congress (the general assembly of the Union’s members) to be held in September 2012.

### **1. Union engagement to improve IUCN Programme implementation**

In May 2011, the IUCN Council<sup>1</sup> received a report compiled by the IUCN Social Policy Unit detailing IUCN’s policies, programme implementation and capacity related to indigenous peoples issues<sup>2</sup>. In order to enhance IUCN’s work on issues raised in the report, Council formally requested IUCN components to systematically address IUCN policy on indigenous peoples’ issues, as appropriate in all programmes’ work plans. This is particularly relevant in the context of the upcoming IUCN 2013-2016 Programme<sup>3</sup> to be submitted for approval by IUCN Members at the World Conservation Congress in September 2012 (see Section 4). The draft Programme includes reference to indigenous peoples’ issues in its Programme Areas of *Effective and Equitable Governance of Nature’s Use* (which will consolidate IUCN’s work on people-nature relations, rights and responsibilities, and the political economy of nature) and *Deploying Nature-based Solutions to Global Challenges in Climate, Food and Development* (which will expand IUCN’s work on nature’s contribution to tackling problems of sustainable development, particularly in climate change, food security and social and economic development).

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<sup>1</sup> The IUCN Council is the principal governing body of IUCN in between sessions of the World Conservation Congress. It is responsible for the oversight and general control of all the affairs of IUCN, subject to the authority of the World Conservation Congress.

<sup>2</sup> A document with similar information was submitted for the UNPFII’s 10<sup>th</sup> Session (E/C.19/2011/CRP. 8)

<sup>3</sup> Draft IUCN 2013-2016 Programme : [http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn\\_programme\\_2013\\_16\\_third\\_draft\\_january\\_2012.pdf](http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn_programme_2013_16_third_draft_january_2012.pdf)

A guidance document for addressing indigenous peoples' issues within the new IUCN Programme was circulated among technical staff, including regional managers, in June 2011. For further support in this process and for programme-policy coherence, a table indicating how IUCN's work is or can be linked to relevant articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was also provided. These documents will help ensure that appropriate safeguards are integrated into all planned activities that have an impact on indigenous peoples and that efforts are made to secure indigenous peoples' rights and well-being within the context of IUCN interventions. IUCN will continue to seek ways to improve its programmatic engagement on indigenous peoples' issues.

## **2. Reaching out to indigenous peoples' organizations**

IUCN, as a global conservation network, recognizes that while many organizations do not explicitly identify biodiversity conservation as a core objective of their work, they do address associated development and governance issues inherently linked to IUCN's mission to *influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable*. Multi-disciplinary partnerships therefore strengthen IUCN's approach to achieving its mission.

IUCN considers that indigenous peoples' organizations offer valuable expertise and useful networks for effective partnerships that lead to increased impact on the ground and provide guidance on appropriate local, national and international policy influencing. It therefore wishes to expand partnerships and strengthen its engagement with indigenous peoples' organizations for increased collaboration and success in its conservation activities and policy influencing.

IUCN is aware that as a result of relatively stringent requirements for membership applicants to explicitly identify biodiversity and natural resource conservation as core objective for their work, as well as have governance systems determined by a certain legal structure, indigenous peoples' organizations have been under-represented within its constituency. Such requirements may have been appropriate in the past but they need to adapt to growing engagement of all sectors of society in conservation, including indigenous peoples' organizations' whose structures and mandates differ from those of conservation organizations.

IUCN is therefore acting to amend its Statutes and Regulations to facilitate partnerships and broaden its constituency. The IUCN Members' Assembly at the World Conservation Congress in September 2012 will discuss measures and processes to allow more flexibility for organizations, including indigenous peoples' organizations, to join the Union.

Discussions with representatives of indigenous peoples' organizations that are members of IUCN will be held at the World Conservation Congress, and it is expected that these will be followed by a process to investigate further opportunities and possibilities for strengthening involvement of indigenous peoples in the Union as part of the 2013-2016 IUCN Council agenda.

**IUCN invites indigenous organizations to apply for membership and engage with the Union in achieving its mission as it relates to indigenous peoples' rights and interests.**

### 3. Indigenous peoples' rights and protected areas

#### a) Addressing indigenous peoples' issues in World Heritage processes and site management

IUCN is the official Advisory Body to the World Heritage Committee on natural and mixed (cultural and natural) World Heritage Sites<sup>4</sup>, and as such evaluates new site nominations and monitors the state of conservation of inscribed Sites. As many of these Sites overlap with traditional lands, the involvement of indigenous peoples and local communities in the establishment and management of World Heritage Sites is paramount. Issues such as land rights, free prior and informed consent, access to resources and benefit sharing mechanisms are of crucial importance.

As expressed at the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Permanent Forum<sup>5</sup>, IUCN recognizes the often long-established indigenous peoples' stewardship of areas contained in natural World Heritage Sites and the associated tangible and intangible cultural heritage. It also values the commitment, ecological knowledge and customary practices of indigenous peoples living in and around World Heritage Sites. Indigenous peoples therefore represent key actors and logical allies, whose human rights must be assured in the protection of these outstanding places.

In partnership with World Heritage Convention advisory bodies ICOMOS and ICCROM and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, IUCN continues its engagement in a process to mainstream rights-based approaches in operative World Heritage management. It sees engagement of indigenous peoples and local communities in all stages of World Heritage nomination, designation and management as crucial in achieving the World Heritage mission which includes efforts to "encourage participation of the local population in the preservation of their cultural and natural heritage"<sup>6</sup>. IUCN and its partners will use the occasion of the World Heritage Convention celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2012 with the theme of "World Heritage and Sustainable Development the Role of Local Communities" to continue raising awareness of indigenous peoples' and local communities' rights and roles in securing the world's cultural and natural heritage.

As part of this effort, IUCN will hold discussions on human rights and World Heritage at the World Conservation Congress in September 2012 and will prepare information materials to support them that will include: lessons learned from selected World Heritage Sites about the challenges of and opportunities for applying a rights-based approach; analysis of the present status, strengths and opportunities for improvement of IUCN's evaluation processes as they relate to the rights of local communities and indigenous peoples; and recommendations for improving certain procedures related to the World Heritage Convention to ensure that human rights are properly considered in World Heritage processes.

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<sup>4</sup> World Heritage Sites are established under the World Heritage Convention; they are key places for the conservation of cultural and natural values of the world.

<sup>5</sup> The IUCN Statement *World Heritage Sites and Indigenous Peoples* from the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of UNPFII can be found here: [http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn\\_unpfii\\_statement\\_on\\_item\\_3b\\_2.pdf](http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn_unpfii_statement_on_item_3b_2.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> World Heritage Information Kit: [http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/activities/documents/activity-567-1.pdf?bcsi\\_scan\\_F3293F689D82B9C2=9fzW/rk8CNjkipueWOPJ+ythQlgBAAAA7r4FAA==&bcsi\\_scan\\_filename=activity-567-1.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/activities/documents/activity-567-1.pdf?bcsi_scan_F3293F689D82B9C2=9fzW/rk8CNjkipueWOPJ+ythQlgBAAAA7r4FAA==&bcsi_scan_filename=activity-567-1.pdf)

In November 2011, on the invitation from UNESCO, IUCN met with the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, the UNPFII Chair, the EMRIP Chair and representatives from UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS to discuss these issues and looks forward to their continued collaboration in improving World Heritage Site nomination and management practices to better address indigenous peoples' issues.

#### **b) A process for assessing and addressing human rights in the context of protected areas**

Following a meeting of its Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP), in Whakatane, New Zealand in January 2011, IUCN, its member the Forest Peoples Programme and regional partners are discussing and designing an approach to address the human rights situation of specific communities in protected areas and, where people are negatively affected by management policies or practices, to propose and implement solutions. The approach, provisionally called the "Whakatane Mechanism" will analyse, case by case, the current situation of indigenous peoples and local communities living in and around a given protected area. This will feed into wider efforts aimed at enabling greater recognition and contribution to the realization of rights in the context of protected areas.

#### **4. Raising and addressing indigenous issues at the upcoming 2012 World Conservation Congress**

The IUCN World Conservation Congress is a key meeting point of the global conservation community. Held every four years, it aims to improve how local to global actors manage the natural environment for human, social and economic development. Indigenous peoples have been key participants in previous IUCN Congresses. The 2012 World Conservation Congress will be held from 6 to 15 September 2012 in Jeju, Republic of Korea. The Congress has two components:

- A Forum where IUCN members and partners discuss cutting edge ideas, thinking and practice.
- A Members' Assembly which is a unique global environmental parliament of governments and NGOs.

Leaders from government, the public sector, non-governmental organizations, business, UN agencies and civil society organizations will discuss, debate and decide solutions for the world's most pressing environment and development issues. It therefore provides a unique opportunity for uniting various constituencies, including indigenous peoples' organizations, to identify opportunities for united efforts in implementing rights-based approaches that work toward environmental sustainability and promoting human well-being. IUCN will organize a series of meetings with indigenous peoples' representatives and Members to solidify partnerships and identify avenues for collaboration.

Indigenous peoples' issues are being addressed in a number of organized events at the Congress. IUCN encourages indigenous peoples' participation in these activities and looks forward to productive discussions and strengthening its networks to assist its global efforts in assuring its vision of a "just world that values and conserves nature". IUCN will be meeting its indigenous organization members at UNPFII for a World Conservation Congress preparatory meeting.