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Indigenous Peoples in the IUCN Programme

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Presentation

This document provides an overview of IUCN – the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s main activities related to indigenous issues since the 8th session of the UNPFII in May 2009.

IUCN helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges. It supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world and brings governments, non-government organisations, United Nations agencies, private sector partners and local communities together to develop and implement policy, laws and best practice. It promotes indigenous peoples' rights in the context of conservation, enables dialogue between local communities and policy makers and works to strengthen local institutions for long-term conservation success.

The report will highlight IUCN's recent activities focusing on indigenous peoples' issues, including topics such as the relationship between indigenous peoples and climate change (referring to the December 2009 UNFCCC COP15 in Copenhagen), the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) agenda, sacred natural sites, rights-based approaches to ecosystem management, natural resource governance, protected areas and gender issues.

1. Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change

1.1 Overview

IUCN's climate change work takes an ecosystem-based approach and puts emphasis on understanding the links between social and ecosystem vulnerability. It aims to develop conceptual and policy guidance to address climate change mitigation and adaptation from a perspective of rights and equity.

IUCN emphasises that indigenous peoples face specific challenges as a consequence of climate change and related policy response measures. Although they are among those who contribute least to carbon emissions, indigenous communities are some of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. In many cases, indigenous peoples, whose livelihoods often depend on their land and its natural resources, have been pushed to climate sensitive, resource-poor areas due to outside developments. Remaining indigenous territories such as the Arctic, near-sea-level regions (especially islands) and high mountain ranges are also particularly at risk. Although adaptation strategies such as seasonal migration and traditional resource management have increased their resilience to environmental variation over centuries, recent changes in land use and national tenure regimes have reduced their access to key lands and resources.

The lack of land and resource security is further exacerbated by factors such as weak governance systems that do not respect their institutions and customary law, poor information access and lack of full and effective participation in decision-making processes that determine the mitigation and adaptation measures applied to their native lands. This makes it crucial to address indigenous peoples' vulnerability and to ensure that responses to climate change be rooted in an understanding of their rights and needs as human beings and peoples. As indigenous peoples' vulnerability to climate change is largely determined by the degree to which their full range of rights is recognised and secured, a rights-based approach (RBA) can help increase their resilience (see **2**).

Within the last year, IUCN's work on indigenous peoples has specifically included discussions on: climate change and justice; climate change adaptation and the role of traditional knowledge and practices; climate change and human rights; equitable benefit-sharing and land rights under REDD; and the inclusion of gender considerations within the UNFCCC framework. These topics formed a significant part of IUCN's involvement in the UNFCCC COP15 in Copenhagen, December 2009. In addition, these were included in a briefing paper providing an overview of the links between indigenous peoples and climate change prepared for the European Parliament's Human Rights Subcommittee (DROI) in May 2009. This paper aimed to support the design of appropriate responses from EU bodies on the vulnerability of indigenous peoples to climate change, making special reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

1.2 IUCN, indigenous peoples and UNFCCC COP15 Copenhagen 2009

IUCN integrated principles of UNDRIP and other relevant human rights instruments into its position papers for COP 15, and appointed a Focal Point on Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change who focused on supporting and promoting coalition building for the inclusion of indigenous issues in the outcomes of the negotiations. This included specific references to indigenous peoples' rights to lands, territories and resources and stated aims to ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in accordance to their right to free, prior and informed consent for conservation activities and climate change adaptation/mitigation initiatives. Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge, innovations and practices were recognised as important contributions for strengthening local environmental stewardship and enabling livelihood adaptations to climate change.

IUCN's participation in several key events relating to indigenous issues allowed for expert policy analysis, networking and information-sharing, especially amongst IUCN's indigenous members. Further talks stressed the need to recognise local customary rights in the development of climate change management strategies. Indigenous peoples' participation in the development and implementation of the REDD agenda was stated to be particularly important in order to avoid conflicts and disaggregation of communities (see **1.3**).

The Copenhagen Accord itself did not contain any explicit reference to indigenous peoples. However, as a result of the advocacy and lobbying of various indigenous representatives and partners throughout the negotiations, the texts of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) and the Ad-hoc Working Group for Long-term Cooperative Action (LCA) made special mention of the need for participation and contribution of indigenous peoples for appropriate project implementation and monitoring in regard to climate change mitigation and REDD. The draft LCA text also includes reference to UNDRIP. IUCN notes that national priorities still dominate the REDD stage and it encourages further reference to UNDRIP in future national and international climate change legislation.

1.3 IUCN and REDD

IUCN is currently helping lead an initiative to develop standards for governments, NGO's, financing agencies and other stakeholders to design and implement REDD and other forest carbon programmes that respect the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities and generate significant social and biodiversity co-benefits.

IUCN's work on REDD specifically looks into ensuring that initiatives providing incentives are carried out with full social safeguards to protect the interests and rights of indigenous peoples and to pursue policies and mechanisms that secure their land and access to resources. IUCN

is working with a range of international partners to support the integration of standards and safeguards on social equity and the rights of indigenous peoples and communities throughout the REDD processes. Furthermore, its REDD activities are to explicitly include women when ensuring the full and effective, gender-balanced participation of all relevant stakeholders in REDD decision-making processes and action.

A number of REDD pilot projects have begun worldwide and IUCN is providing institutional and technical support in ensuring that local and marginalised peoples are incorporated as active stakeholders in schemes from early planning and developmental stages. It intends to promote regional collaboration and establish equitable, clear and accountable benefit-sharing from REDD programmes. In Guatemala, Papua (Indonesian Province), Cameroon, Liberia and Ghana, IUCN is engaging in a pro-poor REDD project that works to coordinate REDD preparation activities and organise workshops and training sessions to help local and indigenous community members be better informed about the REDD agenda and its potential benefits and risks. As key negotiators, they are encouraged to voice their needs and opinions in the development and eventual implementation of REDD. Although proper policy level implementation is required to ensure international accountability, local involvement and support of indigenous communities will play a crucial role in the success of this initiative on the ground. IUCN therefore looks forward to further collaboration with indigenous community members to facilitate their participation in the development, implementation and monitoring of REDD initiatives, based on their own decisions.

2. IUCN, the Rights-Based Approach and Governance

2.1 Conservation Initiative on Human Rights (CIHR)

Eight major international conservation organisations of the world – IUCN and its Members Birdlife International, Conservation International, Fauna & Flora International, The Nature Conservancy, Wetlands International, Wildlife Conservation Society and WWF (Worldwide Fund For Nature/World Wildlife Fund), created the international Conservation Initiative on Human Rights (CIHR), to work on the integration of human rights principles in their conservation activities. Under this Initiative, each of the participating organisations commits to upholding a series of human rights principles, enhancing its capacities to ensure their implementation, and putting in place the appropriate accountability measures. IUCN is exploring ways to apply a rights-based approach (RBA) across its programme in an effort to promote the understanding that human well-being and nature conservation are inextricably linked. It has recently produced two key publications on RBA: *Rights-based approaches: Exploring issues and opportunities for conservation* and *Conservation with justice: A rights-based approach*, and is currently involved in further discussion and development of this framework. IUCN is planning to continue to involve indigenous leaders and networks in collaborative work on human rights in the context of conservation (for documents and further information please visit http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/social_policy/).

In August 2009, IUCN participated in a Meeting of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) of the UN Human Rights Council. It was held to review the resolutions and recommendations adopted at the 4th IUCN World Conservation Congress relevant to indigenous peoples and discuss ways to advance implementation of a rights-based approach to conservation and natural resource governance. All participants agreed in promoting UNDRIP in conservation and natural resource governance programmes. It was noted that further dialogue between governments, indigenous peoples and other stakeholders is needed to ensure that UNDRIP is actively upheld and that policy makers need to be made aware of how conservation and natural resource management can benefit from indigenous peoples' knowledge and customary laws. IUCN is working on an action plan to materialise a

rights-based approach to conservation and is engaging with community and political stakeholders and expanding programmes that support co-management or shared governance of protected areas and natural resources.

2.2 Indigenous Peoples and Natural Resource Governance

IUCN is currently undertaking a 5-year portfolio of 10 international projects named “Improving Natural Resource Governance for Poverty Reduction”. The project, funded by the U.K Department for International Development (DFID)’s Governance and Transparency Fund, advocates legal, policy and institutional changes for recognising and respecting the rights of poor and marginalised natural resource dependent people, and building better linkages between local institutions / communities and local government authorities. Communities are given tools and capacities to hold officials, state agencies and other institutions to account.

For example, work focusing on indigenous peoples and enhanced local governance, land tenure and resource access is being carried out in mountain areas in Peru and Bolivia where IUCN is promoting policy and institutional changes to secure indigenous rights in decision-making related to Millennium Development Goal actions. IUCN and its partners carry out participatory analysis of indigenous peoples’ practices in biodiversity conservation and analysis of the legal framework, institutions and governance mechanisms that affect indigenous peoples’ land tenure and livelihoods security. It also aims to ensure that indigenous customary laws related to natural resources and biodiversity are included in the existing local governance tools. Recommendations focused on the rights, roles of and benefits to indigenous peoples and local communities will be given in regard to the implementation of payment for ecosystem goods and services schemes. A forum to exchange ideas and information in order to formulate policy recommendations will be created. As a result, it is hoped that the communities will have greater capacities to communicate with other stakeholders and make their interests known and secure their livelihoods and roles as environmental stewards.

In Garba Tula, Kenya, IUCN currently assists the Wildlife Resource Advocacy Programme (WRAP) in carrying out a project aimed at strengthening Boran Pastoralists’ rights over land by documenting their customary laws and encouraging the County Council to adopt them as by-laws. They will help create Community Natural Resource Management Plans by supporting capacity building, resource mapping and business planning and by implementing monitoring programmes. IUCN is also currently harnessing indigenous rangelands knowledge in creating a foundation for strategic management and securing sustainable drought-resilient livelihoods in the region. This indigenous knowledge and experience reservoir is particularly important for drylands ecosystems and the communities living within them in light of altering climatic patterns. Similar traditional knowledge documentation and incorporation is currently planned for sustainable natural resource management in West and Central African environments.

The IUCN-Mesoamerica Regional Office (IUCN-ORMA) is also active in indigenous peoples initiatives. One of the biggest concerns for indigenous peoples’ rights and well-being in Mesoamerica is the potential impact of megaprojects including dams, highways, and large-scale resource extraction enterprises. IUCN-ORMA is studying the dynamics of such processes in indigenous territories and protected areas in order to understand the situation and help indigenous peoples better enforce their rights and avoid or prevent environmental damage as a consequence of these megaprojects. IUCN-ORMA is currently building national maps depicting locations of indigenous territories, protected areas and commercial resource exploitation. This work explores the controversial and sensitive social issues behind large-scale resource extraction and land rights and is aimed at contributing to a better understanding of the dynamics and stakeholders involved. In doing so, IUCN-ORMA is better able to target its work supporting indigenous peoples in the defense of their rights.

IUCN-ORMA also manages a fund that provides grants to civil society organisations from the region whose work aims to influence public policies dealing with management of natural resources, protected areas and indigenous peoples' rights. Through this fund, several initiatives coming from indigenous organisations have been supported.

As a follow-up, IUCN-ORMA will work on the development of protocols for the application of free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples in the development of commercial enterprises on their territories and on the equitable sharing of benefits derived from these activities. These standards and protocols would enable them to become substantially involved at a political level. IUCN-ORMA is therefore making efforts to ensure that potential benefits from resource extraction reach indigenous communities in the region and is working to integrate the theme of indigenous peoples in the context of poverty and conservation initiatives at local and policy-level decision-making.

In addition, IUCN uses participatory visualization techniques in its Livelihoods and Landscapes Strategy projects to effectively involve indigenous peoples and other stakeholders in planning, managing and making decisions about their natural resources. They are encouraged to illustrate their visions and perceptions of present and possible future landscapes using images (drawings, graphics, photos, animation etc...) as an easy way to communicate their concerns and priorities about their local environment. The results can help in developing planning and monitoring tools and ensure that indigenous peoples' and local communities' interests and rights are integrated into natural resource management.

3. Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas

3.1 IUCN, Social Justice and Local Management

Protected areas are one of the most important tools for biodiversity conservation and have traditionally been a key field for IUCN. Many protected areas of the world, including marine areas, overlap with lands, territories and resources of indigenous, traditional and rural peoples. Conflicts have emerged from the fact that, in many cases, protected areas have not respected the rights of local populations. The 2008 publication of IUCN's *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories* emphasises the need to take indigenous peoples' rights into account when determining protected area management. This is being actively implemented in many of IUCN's international projects. For example, in IUCN's Central and West Africa programmes, indigenous peoples are key participants in discussions concerning conservation initiatives. IUCN aims to improve local governance and enable indigenous groups to manage their own environments based on their rights and responsibilities.

Integrating social justice and new partnerships in protected area management has been an important objective of IUCN and its partners. IUCN's Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP) and the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) developed a Theme on Indigenous and Local Communities, Equity and Protected Areas (TILCEPA) in 2000. The Steering Committee for this Initiative met in May 2009 and stressed the need to promote inter-ministerial planning at a policy level that takes into account both social and biological aspects of conservation in operationalising its protected area schemes. To this extent, IUCN wishes to encourage dialogue between the traditionally distinct social and environmental political structures that shape policy and to enhance collaboration between these ministries and local institutions for optimal socio-ecological management.

In September 2009, TILCEPA held several working groups at the International Workshop of the Future of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)'s Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) on Jeju Island in South Korea. Indigenous delegates from Asia, Latin America, Oceania and Africa participated in this event. TILCEPA issued a report specifically focusing on indigenous peoples and local community issues in the context of protected areas. Although there are good examples to learn lessons from, there are still many cases of bad or inequitable practice and this is generally regarded as one of the least successful parts of the PoWPA. It was noted that protected areas sometimes become pawns in a broader dialogue addressing greater objectives such as land claims and restitution of past wrongs. Partnerships between protected area managers and indigenous groups are particularly important to promote good practices and ensure that potential climate finances (e.g. REDD) are distributed fairly and equitably.

During the Jeju workshop, TILCEPA focused on the issue of social assessment and indicator reporting, particularly related to Element 2 of the PoWPA. According to the review assessments of PoWPA, Element 2, which deals with governance, rights and participation, had been the weakest area of implementation. WCPA agreed in Jeju that more attention was needed on the issue of rights, governance and equity. TILCEPA recommended a focus on the development of effective assessment, bench marks and transparency, including, where possible, indigenous and local involvement in the design and implementation of the social assessment. This led to a joint TILCEPA / Protected Area Equity and Livelihoods Taskforce workshop on social assessment and Protected Areas Management Evaluation in Bangkok in February 2010. Members of both WCPA and CEESP attended and work on a framework for Social Assessment of Protected Areas has begun. A report produced lays out a new strategic plan that indigenous regional networks can refer to in developing their advocacy and involvement in protected area management and other discussions on CBD.

As protected areas have become an increasingly important repository of carbon and refuges for biodiversity, it is vital that all resources, including indigenous knowledge and experience be explored for long-term conservation schemes. Ecosystem and community resilience to climate change is dependent on their capacity to adapt and this calls for greater recognition and promotion of strong local governance in applying a holistic approach to climate change adaptation/mitigation.

IUCN hopes to further its relations with indigenous groups and include them in discussions over climate change adaptation/mitigation and protected area management so as to improve relations between institutions and allow for cooperative and multi-angled approaches to ecosystem management.

3.2 Sacred Natural Sites: Protecting Key Areas for People and the Environment

Another area of IUCN's work on protected areas, climate change and indigenous peoples focuses on sacred natural sites. Although many are not formally recognised as protected areas, sacred sites represent reservoirs of bio-cultural diversity. They are sometimes remnants of once more widespread habitats on the landscape that have persisted over long periods of time due to their resilience derived from indigenous management practices. Climate change presents a threat to these sites as they, and their associated cultures, are at risk from fluctuating climatic shifts and extreme weather events.

This said, many of these sites and their associated cultures have shown remarkable resilience over the years despite many varied pressures. IUCN is therefore aiming to strengthen the inbuilt resilience of these sites. Areas for action include development of policy and legal frameworks that recognize sacred natural sites as protected areas, research and demonstration of case studies and the establishment of learning sites. In its efforts to reach local institutions, IUCN presented Spanish and Russian versions of its *Sacred Natural Sites*:

Guidelines for Protected Area Managers publication at the Ninth World Wilderness Congress in Merida, Mexico in November 2009.

4. IUCN, Indigenous Peoples and Gender Issues

IUCN sees a particular need to increase equality and equity between men and women in their access to resources, control of traditional knowledge and participation in governance and decision-making. Women are important and resourceful stakeholders in issues such as access to land and natural resources, land use, conflict resolution and household food security, particularly during difficult economic and climatic conditions. Their perspectives, needs and rights therefore need to be incorporated into biodiversity and other conservation research and decision-making processes.

In its regional work on indigenous peoples in Latin America, IUCN is especially committed to strengthening indigenous women's presence and leadership. Activities include, among others, providing technical support to the Latin American Network on Indigenous Women and Biodiversity. Special importance is attached to ensuring high representation of indigenous women in a range of capacity building workshops. For example, in June 2009, IUCN held a workshop on climate change and indigenous women in Honduras. Here, women were informed of the history of climate change science, on the international agenda and present legislative priorities. They voiced their opinions and worries and shared their experiences with climate change. Topics discussed include:

- Threatened food security
- Health and well-being
- Biodiversity loss (including traditional medicinal plants)
- Water governance
- Sea-level rise
- Extreme weather (droughts/floods)
- Access to information
- Vulnerable land use and farming practices
- Commercial resource extraction and deforestation
- Poverty exacerbation

Special attention was given to indigenous women and their roles and vulnerabilities in disaster management. Knowledge sharing is important for the transfer of coping skills and building a network of collaborating communities that face similar threats. Further discussions and meetings strengthening the solidarity and voice of indigenous women at local, regional and international levels are planned and IUCN continues to promote indigenous women and participatory and gender-balanced processes in all of its initiatives.

5. Integration of Indigenous Concerns in Other Thematic Areas

IUCN thematic programmes working at regional and global levels actively integrate indigenous peoples' issues at different scales. For example, there is systematic consideration of the rights of indigenous and other forest-dependent peoples in the work of the Forest Conservation Programme, globally and regionally, where IUCN focuses specifically on supporting governance improvements based on the recognition and strengthening of rights, and on revitalizing and integrating traditional management systems in forest management. Activities

related to water conservation also take a rights and governance approach by studying and strengthening of customary water management regimes of indigenous and traditional peoples. Its World Heritage Programme explores ways to incorporate indigenous priorities into their management recommendations. Work on such topics in IUCN's programmes is supported by the activities of its Environmental Law Programme, as well as by the programmes run by the offices of the IUCN Chief Scientist, the Senior Adviser on Gender and the Senior Adviser on Social Policy.

As previously described, IUCN's Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP) and World Commission of Protected Areas (WCPA) are actively involved in indigenous peoples issues and increasingly interested in supporting on-the-ground implementation and policy developments as needed. IUCN's Commission on Environmental Law (CEL) has also established a Specialist Group focusing on legal aspects of the links between indigenous peoples and conservation and works to ensure the inclusion of indigenous peoples' into environmental Access and Benefit Sharing regimes. Other IUCN Commissions and Programmes take growing interest in indigenous issues, for example on matters related to cultural practices and value systems and how these can be respectfully incorporated into initiatives

A big part of IUCN's recent work has been to promote traditional/indigenous knowledge (e.g. wildlife tracking skills, botanical knowledge for food and medicines, animal husbandry and animal behaviour knowledge) as an important resource for conservation. It has become clearer that the dichotomy between "nature" and "culture" needs to be bridged to lead to mutual cooperation and problem solving between political and local stakeholders. IUCN believes that the bio-cultural diversity that has historically supported much of the Earth's biodiversity should be respected and incorporated into landscape management.

Thus, IUCN's global conservation programme is supported by a wide array of projects, Commissions and units that are increasingly contributing to a better integration of indigenous peoples issues. IUCN looks forward to further development of its rights-based approach and collaboration with indigenous leaders and networks and other socio-political institutions in advancing its agenda.

6. Outlook to the Future Development of IUCN's Activities

Main areas of IUCN's continued work related to indigenous peoples will include:

1. Further promoting and supporting Indigenous Conservation Territories (ICTs) and Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Areas (IPCCAs), and the respect of indigenous peoples' rights in relation to protected areas.
2. Further promoting indigenous peoples' rights and roles and the recognition of traditional knowledge in climate change adaptation and mitigation, including REDD.
3. Continued work on the empowerment of indigenous women in related issues such as biodiversity management, climate change, and participation in global environmental conventions.
4. Continued support to indigenous networks and promotion of regional indigenous agendas related to conservation of their lands and territories and natural resource management.

5. Strengthening the rights-based approach in IUCN's work related to governance and natural resource management, especially in forest, water, mountain and drylands areas.
6. Helping to develop considerations, frameworks and indicators for social assessments of protected areas and mechanisms involved in biodiversity conservation (such as the CBD Protected Areas Programme of Work and Strategic Action Plan and REDD).
7. With its Members, further strengthening and promoting the Conservation Initiative on Human Rights to support the integration of rights-based approaches in international conservation programmes.

ANNEX I

Acronyms List

- CBD:** Convention on Biological Diversity
- CEESP:** IUCN's Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy
- CEL:** IUCN's Commission on Environmental Law
- CIHR:** Conservation Initiative on Human Rights
- COP:** Conference of the Parties
- DFID:** Department for International Development, United Kingdom
- DROI:** European Parliament's Human Rights Subcommittee
- EMRIP:** Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- ICT:** Indigenous Conservation Territories
- IPCCA:** Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Areas
- IUCN:** International Union for Conservation of Nature
- IUCN-ORMA:** IUCN's Mesoamerica Regional Office
- LCA:** Ad-hoc working group for Long-term Cooperative Action
- PoWPA:** Programme of Work on Protected Areas
- RBA:** Rights-Based Approach
- REDD:** Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation
- SBSTA:** Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice
- TILCEPA:** CEESP's Theme on Indigenous and Local Communities, Equity and Protected Areas
- UNDRIP:** United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- UNFCCC:** United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- UNPFII:** United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
- WARP:** Wildlife Resource Advocacy Programme, Kenya
- WCPA:** IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas
- WWF:** World Wide Fund for Nature or World Wildlife Fund (North America)

About IUCN

Founded in 1948, IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) brings together States, government agencies and a diverse range of non-governmental organizations in a unique world partnership: over 1000 members in all, spread across some 160 countries. As a Union, IUCN seeks 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. IUCN builds on the strengths of its members, networks and partners to enhance their capacity and to support global alliances to safeguard natural resources at local, regional and global levels.