

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and REDD+

March 2010

Indigenous peoples and local communities¹ (IPLC) depend on ecosystems and in particular, native forest for their livelihoods, using plants, animals and their products for food, clothing, fuel, medicine, and shelter. The economy, social organization, identity, and cultural and spiritual values of these communities are closely linked to their biological diversity.

However, territories and lands of both indigenous peoples and local communities are often located in forested landscapes experiencing rapid social and economic change due to a combination of factors. These include the expansion of commercial farming and ranching, commercial logging, infrastructure development, mineral exploitation, immigration of settlers from other areas and climate change.

Many of the landscapes where indigenous peoples and local communities live are critical to global conservation and climate change efforts.

Indigenous peoples and local communities are engaged in discussions on climate change to a limited extent both internationally and nationally. However, there are still information gaps on what threat climate change represents to their communities. There is a need to explore how REDD+² mechanisms will impact indigenous peoples and local communities, how they will ensure equitable distribution of benefits, and respect their rights. Additionally, indigenous peoples and local communities are at the forefront of the issue of adaptation yet their input has rarely been incorporated into the discussions at the national and international level regarding the development of adaptation strategies and funding mechanisms.

Indigenous peoples and local communities, in the struggle for recognition of their basic human rights have made significant strides through international instruments such as the adoption of ILO Convention 169 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). These internationally recognized instruments, when implemented at the national level, allow them to consolidate their traditional ways of life, address their land and resources rights, strengthen their organization, and promote autonomous sustainable development of their lands and territories, all of which are compatible with the efforts of environmental organizations.

As such, we the undersigned NGOs, recognize that we have a common interest to search for the best approaches for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems that provide for vital services for human well-being.

¹ The meaning of “local communities” here includes the forest-dependent communities that are not legally recognized as indigenous peoples, traditional communities in the national legislation.

² We support a mechanism that encompasses reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD), sustainable management of natural forests subject to strict environmental and social criteria and robust carbon accounting, conservation of existing natural forests and maintenance of carbon stocks including in areas with high forest cover and low deforestation rates, enhancement of forest carbon stocks through the restoration/improvement of existing but degraded forests, and increasing forest cover through environmentally appropriate afforestation and reforestation.

As established in the Bali Action Plan, we also recognize that the needs of indigenous peoples and local communities should be addressed when action is taken to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. Moreover, these actions should ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in the design and implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation processes, mechanisms and activities including mitigation and adaptation funds; as well as the recognition and respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, and the equitable sharing of benefits. In this respect, in relation to REDD+, the SBSTA meeting at COP 15, included in their decision under methodological guidance: “Recognizing the need to promote **the full and effective engagement of indigenous people and local communities in, and the potential contribution of their knowledge to, monitoring and reporting of activities.**” Additionally, the current REDD+ negotiating text (FCCC/CP/2010/2, Annex V) includes safeguards related to the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities and the respect for the rights and knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, taking into account international obligations, and noting the UNDRIP. This language is a good first step, though it needs to be operationalized by including language about monitoring and reporting on this safeguard in the text.

Additionally, we the undersigned NGOs, recommend that:

- The UNFCCC and member states ensure the recognition of the right to the *lands, territories and resources which IPLC have traditionally owned or occupied*³ in the implementation of any program that affects directly or indirectly indigenous peoples and local communities;
- The UNFCCC and member states ensure that future REDD+ initiatives include the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities through a nationally appropriate body, which should report the fulfillment of this requirement to an official UNFCCC body created for this purpose;
- A REDD+ framework embraces recognized rights instruments and the principles recognized under UNDRIP internationally, namely security of land tenure, resource rights, and traditional knowledge uses (and customary laws). These initiatives should also clearly include multiple benefits of forests for climate, ecosystems, and indigenous peoples and local communities;
- Parties assure the broad participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in the design and development of their national REDD+ readiness strategies; and
- The UNFCCC and member states recognize, respect and implement the principle of **Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)** in all Climate Change mitigation and adaptation processes, mechanisms, and activities impacting indigenous peoples, local communities and other rights holders.

³ Art. 26, 1 UNDRIP

Conservation International ~ Environmental Defense Fund ~ Natural Resources Defense Council
~ The Nature Conservancy ~ Rainforest Alliance ~ Union of Concerned Scientists ~
Wildlife Conservation Society

Additional Goals

- The UNFCCC and member states recognize and incorporate **traditional knowledge and practice** as a fundamental resource in the development of mitigation and adaptation climate change strategies;
- The UNFCCC and member states foster and create formal **structures and mechanisms** at national and international scales that provide for the **full and effective participation** of indigenous peoples and local communities in climate change mitigation and adaptation mechanisms;
- The UNFCCC establish a fund to support indigenous peoples' and local communities' **full and effective participation** in all climate processes, including adaptation, mitigation, monitoring and transfer of appropriate technologies in order to provide funding for the, capacity-building, education, knowledge sharing, and skills transfer needed for such participation; and
- The UNFCCC and member states recognize and support indigenous peoples and local communities' **own sustainable development process**.