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## **A strategy of innovative approaches and recommendations for respecting indigenous and traditional knowledge and culture in the next decade**

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### **A promising future**

The customary territories, lands and marine areas of Indigenous Peoples and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles are among the Earth's most critical, biodiversity-rich lands and seas, and constitute earth's oldest conservation areas and living cultures. These areas are indisputably critical for sustaining, reviving, and strengthening biological and cultural diversity, governance and social-ecological resilience, as well as spirituality for present and future generations. Customary ownership, coupled with application of traditional knowledge by its recognised custodians, continues to be central to effective stewardship of biodiversity by Indigenous peoples and local communities. Full implementation of such international instruments as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), especially with respects to the right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) and secure rights, is essential for effective and equitable conservation in and around protected areas. For conservation to be effective and enduring, future actions on these territories, lands and seascapes must embrace their diversity of knowledge systems, skills and capacities; they must build on customary land/sea tenure, governance systems and custodianship of natural resources; recognise the role and practice of women; provide for intergenerational transfer of knowledge; they must respect and fully protect sacred natural sites and territories; they must ensure Indigenous governance of protected areas within their traditional territories; and they must provide viable and equitable options for sustainable community livelihoods. The promise of these important lands and sea estates can only be fulfilled when these strategic priorities are endorsed and acted upon at all scales by Governments and other entities.

### **The current situation**

Since the 2003 World Parks Congress, there has been increased recognition and respect for Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' rights and traditional knowledge by many governments, intergovernmental organisations and international policy processes. This is reflected internationally in decisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) pertaining to traditional knowledge and customary use, the adoption of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Governance of Tenure and, specifically for Indigenous peoples, the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the outcomes of the UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, among other examples. This has been recognized and celebrated at this Congress. Indigenous Peoples are demanding the recognition of indigenous bio-cultural territories as the 7<sup>th</sup> IUCN category. Areas under the custodianship of Indigenous Peoples and local communities are receiving ever-greater recognition and support in many countries. There is much greater evidence-based documentation of the significant positive conservation impacts achieved through the customary management and governance systems of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the vast ranges of land and sea under their

stewardship. The contributions from these lands and seas to conservation outcomes at local, national, and global scales are now a central part of the conservation discourse and are understood to be crucial to reaching a range of the CBD's Aichi Biodiversity Targets by 2020, including Target 11. Additionally, there is a growing recognition of the role that traditional knowledge plays in increasing community resilience and capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change, as reflected in the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Nonetheless, not enough has been done to put people at the centre of the protected area movement. Indigenous Peoples and local communities have not yet been fully recognized as equal partners in conservation efforts and their traditional knowledge, cultural practices and governance are not being fully harnessed in ecosystem management. This is due, among other factors, to the limited understanding that persists in many conservation and protected areas communities of Indigenous, traditional and local knowledge systems and their central role in governance and management; a lack of genuine co-management or effective support from most parties for governance and management by Indigenous Peoples and local communities; and, in many countries, inadequate recognition of community rights of ownership and control over land, sea and biological resources. This last decade has also seen continued dispossession and displacement of communities from conservation activities and an increase in external pressures, such as from development and extractive industries.

The situation can be turned around based on strong evidence demonstrating that where policies recognize, support and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the importance of their traditional knowledge and governance systems, conservation values and peoples well-being are improved and sustained. There are several global and national platforms, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the CBD, the UNFCCC, the UNCCD and the World Heritage Convention, for these advances to harness political support and build momentum. In addition, a number of funders are helping provide the long-term financing necessary to create and sustain capacity in culturally relevant ways, revive and strengthen traditional knowledge, and secure and protect customary lands and territories of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. A large task remains to equip mainstream protected area and resource managers to recognize the centrality of Indigenous and community lands to the future of global conservation and support rights-based approaches to achieving conservation outcomes: resources for this retraining have yet to be identified.

## Recommendations for change

1. By 2020, all governments recognise, strengthen, and appropriately support the collective land and resource rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to their lands and seas and achieving their contribution to their countries' conservation, climate resilience and socio-economic goals based on demonstrated evidence that shows a strong connection between secure territorial rights, with their own governance systems, improved conservation values and community well-being.
2. IUCN, the WPCA and Indigenous Peoples develop a new category system for indigenous territories management, including Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) and create a committee for the monitoring and implementation of this category system, The Promise of Sydney and other international commitments that fully and effectively engages Indigenous Peoples.
3. By 2020 IUCN and its members, including governments and protected area managers, co-create programmes with the full consent and involvement of traditional knowledge holders for the respectful application and maintenance of traditional knowledge and customary governance systems, ensuring that actions in and around protected areas are built on the combination of diverse knowledge systems, skills and capacities, integrating a rights-based approach.
4. In accordance with UNDRIP, all protected areas established on the territories, lands or seascapes of

Indigenous Peoples fully observe their rights and governance systems, and Indigenous Peoples are fully involved in their creation, designation and management. Where Indigenous Peoples and local communities have been evicted from their lands by the creation of protected areas national laws should be revised to guarantee the restitution of rights and recognise their right to return to and remain on their lands.

5. Traditional knowledge, practices and indigenous economies are promoted and applied in responding to climate change, in particular through local adaptation efforts, and in the conservation and management of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, including Indigenous bio-cultural territories, World Heritage Sites and Sacred Natural Sites (SNS).
6. Management objectives and actions for all ecosystems must recognise the intrinsic and cultural values of those systems and the inherent right of Indigenous communities to use, develop and control these resources.
7. By 2020 the conceptual and management gap between natural and cultural World Heritage Site designations is eliminated, and a comprehensive approach taken towards the conservation of natural and biocultural heritage and knowledge systems in all designated sites.
8. The implementation of the World Heritage Convention is aligned with the principles of UNDRIP and the Outcome Document of the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and the Convention's procedures and Operational Guidelines are amended accordingly, with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples.
9. Governments implement and enforce appropriate laws, policies and programmes, with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to create No-Go areas within World Heritage Sites, Sacred Natural Sites and Territories and in other sites where Indigenous Peoples and local communities are conserving lands and resources, particularly from mining and other extractive and destructive industries. IUCN must establish a Task Force to study and define the "No-Go area" concept, develop a relevant program of work and prepare a motion for endorsement at the 2016 World Conservation Congress.
10. Spatial planning-based decision-making inside and outside protected areas, IPAs, indigenous bio-cultural territories and Sacred Natural Sites and Territories (SNS&Ts) is undertaken with indigenous people in a participatory manner and with their full prior informed consent to ensure that industries and development have a positive impact on biodiversity, people, their well-being and livelihoods. Governments refrain from granting concessions to extractive industries and megaprojects within protected areas.
11. Innovative financing mechanisms including indigenous peoples economic systems and Access and Benefit Sharing mechanisms are created to support indigenous and local land and sea managers in their efforts to promote indigenous economies and implement enduring, effective territorial management using traditional knowledge including a dedicated funding mechanism to support and strengthen Indigenous Peoples in the management of indigenous areas and special funding windows in existing mechanisms.
12. Formal educational opportunities are created to recognize and include Indigenous cultural skills; accredited pathways are provided for Indigenous rangers and trackers that account for their cultural knowledge and skills, including for non-literate expert trackers, and are promoted and shared internationally.
13. Governments, organizations and communication companies support access by Indigenous Peoples to new information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as satellite monitoring systems to enable them to manage their territories and participate in the management of protected areas generally more effectively.
14. All governments and the IUCN formally recognize important role that Indigenous women and youth play in

developing and maintaining protected areas of all types and give special attention in all of these recommendations to promoting and strengthening their participation at all levels of protected area management from local through to the institutional structure of IUCN.

## Key partnerships needed

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Organizations  
Indigenous land councils  
Governments  
Environmental NGOs  
Donor organisations  
IPBES  
CBD  
UNU  
Traditional Knowledge Initiative  
UNESCO LINKS  
UNFCCC Nairobi Work Programme  
World Meteorological Organisation  
World Intellectual Property Organisation  
Member States of the World Heritage Convention  
UNESCO  
ICCROM  
ICOMOS  
IUCN  
EU-ACP  
Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation  
Cybertracker Foundation  
Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee  
North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance Ltd  
GEF  
IFAD  
UNDP and other bilateral and multilateral cooperation