

Agenda Item 4: Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum
UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 20th Session
April 19-30, 2021

**Statement for the 20th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
on Rights-Based Conservation**

Statement on behalf of the Asia Indigenous People's Caucus

We urge the UNPFII to further advance and accelerate the mobilization of support for strengthening and institutionalization of the rights-based approach to conservation and strongly recommend the inclusion of rights-based approach and culture as pillars in the new biodiversity framework of the CBD to ensure that the global targets to conservation results in a win-win outcome and not at the cost of Indigenous Peoples' rights.

The reasons being, the expansion of conservation activities and protected areas violate Indigenous Peoples' fundamental human rights, the rights over our ancestral territories and our ability to enact Indigenous traditional livelihoods and cultural practices. In doing so, the current conservation paradigm is working against the time proven conservation benefits of Indigenous cultures and working against a future where humanity can live in harmony with nature.

Indigenous Peoples are vital stakeholders in the conservation debate as their lands overlap with over 80% of the world's most important biodiversity hotspots. However only, 10% of their lands are legally recognised and secure. Despite a pervasive lack of secure rights, Indigenous Peoples have been continuously managing the natural resources, ecosystem and biodiversity to protect the local environments and defend these spaces from external threats. Indigenous rights are enshrined within international treaties and conventions such as UNDRIP, Paris Accord, CBD and ILO C 169 but violation of these rights continues unabated.

We need to redefine conservation and global environmental action towards supporting and nurturing the multitude of relationships cultures have with our local spaces. The environmental crises taking place around us are all crises of relationships. Modern humanity is destroying the very world it needs to survive. Globally, more than **1.5 billion people** live in important biodiversity conservation areas. In Asia, **850 million** people live in areas highlighted for conservation and at least half of these people are likely to be Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples customarily own and manage 20% of Asia's territory, hardly any of their customarily managed lands are legally recognised.

A rights-based approach is an opportunity to nurture positive relationships with the environment and the world we all share. Political will has been insufficient to initiate transformative change, and a global rights-based approach will democratize environmental action, supporting the livelihoods of millions, security in life and the continuation of culture and traditional livelihoods. It is essential to build a rights-based conservation approach through the customary institution with self governance systems of Indigenous Peoples around the world.

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