



ASIA INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PACT FOUNDATION

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Use of the term “Indigenous Peoples”

Over the decades, the concept of the term **Indigenous Peoples** has evolved beyond the original meaning found in dictionaries. We are using the term **Indigenous Peoples** with capitalised initials to denote its evolved meaning, which is well established in international law as well as in some domestic laws.

The 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of **Indigenous Peoples** (UNDRIP) recognises the right of **Indigenous Peoples** to self-determination, as all other people, by virtue of which they can freely determine their political status. The capitalization of **Indigenous Peoples** is increasingly used by UN bodies, other international and national organisations as well as governments across the world. For example, in Canada the term **Indigenous Peoples** and **First Nations** are capitalised the same way as, for example, the term **Canadian**.

In Asia, governments use different names to refer to us collectively, like **ethnic minorities**, **tribes** and **native people** etc. There are also other names given to us by outsiders, some of which are not appreciated by many of us since they often imply notions of cultural inferiority, being **primitive** or **backward**. Some examples are *sakai* (meaning slave) in Thailand, or *adim jati* (primitive tribes) in India. When we call ourselves **Indigenous Peoples**, we do not intend to claim to be the only native people to our regions and countries. We have also lived side-by-side with other people and communities, native to their own lands settled before the colonial period. These were mostly organized as state societies and are today the dominant people, who have the economic and political power in our regions or countries.

Our notion of guardianship and spiritual relationship to our lands and territories are distinctive features of our worldviews. A strong sense of community and kinship solidarity, collective ownership of land and resources, and consensus decision making are some of the distinctive elements of our social and political institutions that set us apart as **Indigenous Peoples** from our neighbours who belong to the dominant groups or non-indigenous minorities and natives in our countries.

We use **Indigenous Peoples** to emphasize diversity and our rights under international law.

The word “**Indigenous**” is also often used as an adjective with other nouns, like “indigenous plants” (referring to plant species native to an area) or “indigenous knowledge” (referring to local or traditional knowledge), all of which may or may not relate to Indigenous Peoples. In the publications of AIPP, whenever “Indigenous” is used in adjective form, it is with explicit reference to Indigenous Peoples, even though it is not written with a capital initial letter.

Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)

Chiang Mai, Thailand