



Religions *for* Peace



Buen Vivir

*How Indigenous Peoples' Worldview
Can Combat Climate Change*

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UN 
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programme

 **Norad**

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Foreword

On 2-3 June 2022, Stockholm+50 celebrated an important milestone for humanity's relationship to the Earth: the 50th anniversary of the 1972 Conference on the Human Environment. This landmark meeting launched decades of work—and many successes—to address our planetary crisis. However, Stockholm+50 also recognised new concerns that must be urgently addressed.

H.E. Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was the Secretary-General of this International Meeting. Ms. Andersen, the meeting's co-hosts (Sweden and Kenya), and the Stockholm+50 Secretariat were advised by the Stockholm+50 Advisory Group. The advisory group included ten eminent people from different geographic and sectoral backgrounds who provided guidance on matters such as visioning, leadership dialogues, and stakeholder engagement.

Prof. Dr. Azza Karam, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, served as a member of the UNEP Advisory Group, where she filled a critical gap in multi-religious outreach and advocacy by including the perspectives and expertise of faith leaders from Indigenous communities; religious institutions; faith-based organisations; and grassroots interfaith youth and women's organisations. In addition to drawing attention to their contributions to environmental policy and ecological justice, she also ensured that a special focus was placed on the contributions of Indigenous communities.

This paper is one of a five-part series that focuses on how Indigenous Peoples' knowledge can help us all move toward a more sustainable way of life. The series reflects the thoughtful conversations and various perspectives that were shared during and post Stockholm+50 on topics such as protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and environmental defenders; amplifying the voice of women, girls, and youth in climate solutions; and protecting those who are most vulnerable to—and most impacted by—climate change.

Buen Vivir of Indigenous Peoples:


A Necessary Paradigm to Combat Climate Change and Preserve Biodiversity

INTRODUCTION

For hundreds of years, Indigenous Peoples have developed their own values, culture, government, food systems, and ways of coexisting with nature in their territories. Based on their diversity, practices and ancestral knowledge, they share a holistic relationship with nature, in which rights do not have an anthropocentric source; on the contrary, it is nature that allows us to have some rights to maintain balance and harmony of the world. This worldview is known as *buen vivir* or “good living”—a way of life that creates a harmonious relationship between humans and nature.

Indigenous Peoples are diverse, and so are their sacred histories of origin that sustain their visions of the world. Some Peoples see the earth as their mother, while others consider theirs to be the sea, wind, rain, thunder, animals such as eagles or snakes, or a particular mountain. Indigenous Peoples declare that these spiritual parents, siblings or ancestors have rights, as much or perhaps more than us, to continue to exist because of their crucial role in preserving life on the planet.

The stories of origin of Indigenous Peoples are not romanticism or the subject of academic research. Instead, those stories are real, present and effective forms of life for the care of life. At present, it has been proven that Indigenous Peoples, with their knowledge and ways of life, preserve natural harmony and balance in different parts of the world, protecting, for example, the sources of water and oxygen on which we all depend. Such an ability to care for life depends on their holistic forms of knowledge and ways of relating to the territory, which are the foundations of their origin stories. The ancestral practices in which this ability operates, in turn, are central to the most important task at hand for humanity: maintaining life in all its forms and with dignity.



It is important to remember that Indigenous Peoples existed before the formation of States and the widespread focus on individualism and consumption. Colonial processes destroyed much of the Indigenous Peoples' cultures and forms of government, as well as relegating Indigenous Peoples to inhospitable territories. As a result, their voices have been ignored. However, they have preserved their cosmovisions and continued to live by its principles. Today, thanks to such perseverance, they are well prepared to contribute to humanity's struggle against biodiversity loss and ecological crisis.

The silencing of Indigenous Peoples' forms of life has occurred within the framework of a development model that pursues *vivir mejor*. This model focuses on conventional development, which is understood as linear progress and is expressed in terms of economic growth[1].

In this paper, the authors aim to show how the Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, harmonic relation with nature, ways of life, and worldviews representing *buen vivir* are an alternative to *vivir mejor*. The authors do not claim that *buen vivir* is the only alternative or that it is itself a development model. However, *buen vivir* does offer a way to transition from the current development model to an approach that focuses on harmony among human and nature[2].

Finally, the authors acknowledge that embracing the paradigm of *buen vivir* requires profound change. The argument to take on needed systemic efforts is more compelling when framed around climate change and biodiversity. Before delving into the *buen vivir* approach, the authors will present some thoughts on *vivir mejor* development paradigm and the nuances of Indigenous Peoples' participation in and perception of climate change and biodiversity actions.

THE VIVIR MEJOR (OR “LIVE BETTER”) DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

Nation-states focused on a development paradigm based on a market system, competition, and individualism. The goal was *vivir mejor* or “living better.” However, it was based on a market system that supported competition and individualism. As a result, it caused a global crisis that led to the depletion of natural resources and the disruption of humans' connection to nature, as Bolivian Vice-President David Choquehuaca has pointed out. It also unleashed environmental, financial, and institutional crises.

In contrast, Indigenous Peoples have sought to find solutions to halt environmental degradation in order to preserve the natural world for future generations. They have increasingly been able to provide evidence of how their knowledge, ways of life, and intrinsic relationship with nature are essential to this goal.

For example, there's been increasing evidence that Indigenous Peoples who occupy territories with exceptional cultural diversity also enjoy abundant biological diversity and natural resources[3]. Although these findings have sparked the collective imagination, they are often used simply to fill speeches, rather than to recognise the valuable contribution of Indigenous Peoples in the fight against climate change. This is most obvious in that Indigenous Peoples' knowledge is conspicuously absent from policy design on climate change and biodiversity at the global, regional, and national levels.

Although the international framework on the rights of Indigenous Peoples enshrines rights to self-determination, lands, territories, resources, and free, prior, and informed consent, these rights are often not recognised or effectively enforced in many countries. Even in countries where the rights of Indigenous Peoples are legally recognised, they are repeatedly undermined by activities such as granting concessions for mining, logging, monoculture farming, mega-projects, biofuel plantations, dams, and other investments-fueled projects.

These realities reveal how Indigenous Peoples' rights violations are generated by the industries that are the most responsible for climate change. The same forces that support the *vivir mejor* development model are prompting policies that perpetuate colonialism, reductionism, and assimilationism against Indigenous Peoples, which threatens their lives and livelihoods.

Consequently, those measures caused the dispossession of lands and resources, loss of livelihoods, extinction of knowledge and languages, as well as harassment, criminalisation, and killings of Indigenous Peoples and their allies. For example, at least 358 environmental and human rights defenders were killed worldwide in 2021[4] and there are estimates that there will be more than 200 killings in 2022[5]. Yet, there is no precise data on how many have been imprisoned for these actions.


These statistics clearly show the inconsistency between the good intentions of governments to recognise rights and the lack of effective endeavors to fully respect them.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: CARRYING THE BURDEN OF THE PLANETARY CRISIS

Approximately 476 million people belong to the 5,000 different Indigenous Peoples, equivalent to 6.2% of the global population. They come from more than 90 countries[6] and speak 4,000 of the remaining 6,700 languages in the world[7].

Practices imbued with traditional knowledge on ways of relating to nature allowed Indigenous Peoples in these territories to conserve at least 80% of the remaining biodiversity on the planet[8], while occupying only 25% of the terrestrial surface[9]. Studies show that, in Latin America, about 35% of the forests are located in territories occupied by Indigenous Peoples[10].





These facts are helping more people to recognise that Indigenous Peoples are at the forefront of biodiversity conservation; they are agents of change. Their knowledge and practices significantly contribute to solutions to problems related to the loss of biodiversity and climate change[11].

However, because of Indigenous Peoples' dependence on and close relationship with their lands, territories and resources, they are the first to suffer the consequences of climate change, although they contribute the least to greenhouse gas emissions.

In the Arctic, for example, rising temperatures, uncertainty about the seasons, and unexpected winds have changed the availability of edible species for fishing and hunting. For Sámi reindeer herders, increased unpredictability and the frequency of extreme weather events are altering human-animal behaviours[12]. The Indigenous Peoples of the islands are among the most threatened due to rising sea levels[13].


In the Amazon region, rising temperatures, more frequent extreme weather, and deforestation have threatened the availability and stability of local food sources[14]. In other areas, changes in rain cycles make planting periods unpredictable. The variability of breezes and sea temperatures put the food security and sovereignty of people depending on fishing at risk. Traditional seed production methods are in grave danger.

In other territories, the withdrawal of glaciers reduces the space that animals need to co-exist and accelerates water scarcity. In arid regions, the accelerated loss of pollinators puts food security of entire populations at risk. These impacts exacerbate the other inequalities that Indigenous Peoples must deal with, such as political and economic marginalisation, loss of land and resources, unemployment, and discrimination.

Indigenous Women, who have played a fundamental role in preserving biodiversity, livelihoods, languages, and cosmogony for hundreds of years[15], face even more significant risks and greater burdens due to the impacts of climate change and poverty. They still have limitations related to land ownership, as well as inadequate access to services and resources, technologies, and education.

These impacts force Indigenous Peoples to migrate from their territories, within or outside their countries of origin, in search of food and economic opportunities. In Latin America alone, nearly 50% of Indigenous Peoples live in urban areas[16] where they often face double discrimination: both as migrants and as Indigenous Peoples. They become more vulnerable to human trafficking and smuggling, as well as forced labour; this vulnerability is even worse for Indigenous Women and Indigenous Youth.

Although climate change disproportionately affects Indigenous Peoples, they continue to use their knowledge systems to evolve and adapt to environmental and climate changes.



Indigenous Peoples always point out that their care of nature is not only for their people but for humanity. By protecting ecosystems, they guarantee water, food, and the balance required to ensure living conditions for future generations. Still, as resourceful as Indigenous Peoples are, they cannot be expected to sustainably play such a role without enjoying guaranteed rights, the ability to participate in decision-making, and respect for their knowledge and worldviews.

IMAGINARIES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' PARTICIPATION

Today, Indigenous Peoples are actively engaged in discussions about climate change and biodiversity, including Indigenous Peoples' caucuses that are held in the Conferences of Parties on climate change and biodiversity. Indigenous Peoples are also mobilising and promoting campaign and creating alliances that amplify their messages and positions.

However, the increasing visibility of Indigenous Peoples' participation does not mean that they are present when processes of change are being discussed. Many changes continue to be promoted among dominant groups behind closed doors, where Indigenous Peoples are not invited.

Now that COP27 on climate change has ended, it seems clear that the conference effectively presented a microscopic view of a larger system's shortcomings. Participants were divided into groups and, while some were free to move, others had no opportunity to see or participate in the conversations that impact the world's future. With all the contributions that Indigenous Peoples have made—and continue to make—to humanity, it is inconceivable that they as right holders are ignored or not allowed to participate as decisions are made about crucial issues of life on the planet.

A paradigm shift is necessary. It begins with the construction of processes to recover the memory of nature with a culturally appropriate and holistic approach, returning to the origin in respect of worldviews, practices and relationships among nature, humans, and non-humans. It is critical to promote a process that welcomes new epistemologies in order to deconstruct the resistance in our society to learn from the otherness. There is hope for strategies that promote the meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples' representatives. Real participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making ensures legitimacy and long-lasting results.



WHY DISCUSS THE ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY, AND CLIMATE CHANGE SEPARATELY?

50 years ago, the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment served as a critical step for humanity. It presented a vision of the environment from a human rights perspective. Since then, however, nature has been and continues to be thought of separately from cultures and Indigenous Peoples.


For most Indigenous Peoples, life, energy, and spirituality are synonymous. Seeing them separately from science, economics, politics, and religion has led to confusion, disputes, and unnecessary outrages. There is no such division in the cosmos, on earth, and in the hearts of plants, insects, rivers, and seas: all of them are related and interconnected. For Indigenous Peoples, the climate is Mother Earth's language that taught them how to live in harmony, as well as when and where to cultivate, harvest, and protect against a challenging weather.

It is crucial to understand that there is an intrinsic relationship between cultural diversity and biological diversity. For centuries, Indigenous Peoples have had a comprehensive and holistic understanding of life and territory as an interconnected network: what affects the lower part of the territory has an impact on the upper part and vice versa. Nature—not human beings—is at the centre of this worldview. Indeed, nature's rights should come first and humans should come second.

Since there is an integration between nature, cultures, humans, and non-humans, it is not appropriate to discuss the issues of climate change and biodiversity separately. There should not be divided agendas on interconnected matters, especially when both are triggered by humankind's actions and upset nature's equilibrium.

Indigenous Peoples' view of the territory as an interconnected entity suggests that what affects the mountains will impact the jungle, further disrupting rains and water currents. The lack of understanding of this interconnectedness allowed discussion on climate and biodiversity issues to break apart, in turn prompting the adoption of corrective measures that discursively fragment ecosystems. For example, the idea to protect tropical forests actually leads to a breakdown in communication between ecosystems. Protecting only tropical forests leads to the neglect of other ecosystems that are at risk and key to the harmony of the entire territory. One forgets about the water cycles and how, in the end, these cycles depend on the health and balance of multiple intertwined ecosystems.

The international meeting, "Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all—our responsibility, our opportunity," was an attempt to discuss climate change and biodiversity in one place. However, more time was needed to broadly and collectively reflect on the necessity to discuss these topics together. More than 70 Indigenous Peoples from the Arctic, Africa, Asia, Latin America, North America and the Pacific shared how conservation measures and climate change actions are designed, implemented, and presented to them without their participation and consent.



As a result, the Indigenous Peoples Caucus felt an urgency to move in new directions in order to reframe the relationship with nature and cultures. The caucus drafted “[The Stockholm+50 Indigenous Peoples Declaration](#).” With the Declaration, they aimed to stand in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples, raise their voices, and make urgent calls for inclusion to States, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental development organisations, and international financial institutions.

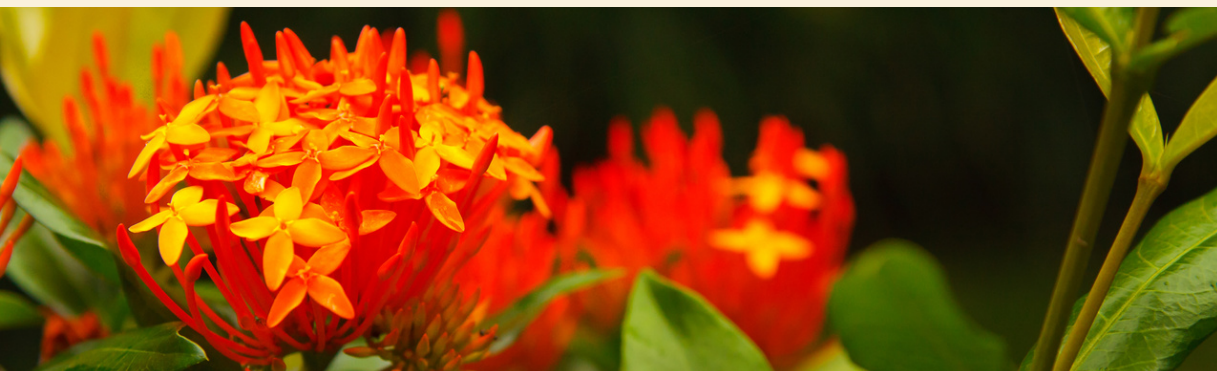
The [Stockholm+50 Indigenous Peoples Declaration](#) reflects Indigenous Peoples’ worldviews and advocates for them to be incorporated in work led by governments and the United Nations. Effective actions are needed to secure a healthy planet—and urgent policy actions require equitable partnership with Indigenous Peoples from the seven socio-cultural regions when designing and implementing climate actions.

The Declaration reiterated that Indigenous Peoples are game-changers in the fight against climate change. They have a sustainable lifestyle and a respectful relationship with nature. Indigenous Peoples’ scientific knowledge, governance, territorial management, and food systems are essential to combat biodiversity loss, hunger, desertification and land degradation. The drafters called for a paradigm shift in conservation and climate change actions that puts a reciprocal and holistic relationship with nature at the centre.

“INCLUSION” MISTAKENLY ASSIMILATES INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Indigenous Peoples have a dedicated legal framework, the result of a solid international movement that began in the 1970s. After that, many Indigenous Peoples started advocating globally for recognition and respect of their rights and have been a distinct constituency at the United Nations since 1977. The adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly in 2007 sanctioned their inherent rights as a minimum international standard. This was a landmark recognition that was the culmination of more than twenty years of work, nurtured by the establishment of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

However, international instruments, such as the Rio conventions, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and policies and projects regarding biodiversity and climate change, often tend to homogenise Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples with local communities, farmers or peasants. This is a mistaken approach. Indigenous Peoples have different livelihoods, ways of life and intrinsic relations with their traditional and ancestral territory. In addition, they have a dedicated legal framework that recognises the specific rights of Indigenous Peoples.



The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples have argued that combining or equating Indigenous Peoples with non-Indigenous groups, such as minorities, vulnerable groups or local communities, undermines Indigenous Peoples' status and position. Such attempts, whether from States or United Nations bodies, are not acceptable to Indigenous Peoples and those mandated to defend their rights. That is why the Permanent Forum urged "all United Nations entities and State parties to treaties concerning the environment, biodiversity and the climate to eliminate the use of the term 'local communities' in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples, so that the term 'Indigenous Peoples and local communities' would be abolished[17]."

MOVING FORWARD FROM ACKNOWLEDGING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' KNOWLEDGE TO TAKING ACTION


Indigenous Peoples are the best allies in the fight against the planetary crisis[18]. This is not a hope or opinion. It is reality.

For millennia, Indigenous Peoples have developed territorial and resource management practices that played a vital role in maintaining the planet's ecological and climatic stability[19]. Their lands are better preserved than national parks and other protected areas, their forests are healthier, and their territories are more effective in sequestering carbon.

These results demonstrate that any discussion about whether Indigenous Peoples' knowledge is "scientific" misses the point. Indigenous Peoples do not require that their knowledge is classified as scientific. Such labeling is a way to assimilate Indigenous Peoples' knowledge with Western knowledge; it implies that other ways of knowing are not legitimate unless they are validated through the lens of Western science. However, the ancient ways of working with nature have proven to be effective. Western scientists and policymakers need to respect Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and promote equal participation as peers when decisions about the environmental crisis are being made. Furthermore, Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge have been systematically cast as objects of research, denying their agency as subjects and actors in the scientific discourse.

For many years, those who claimed to be gatekeepers of knowledge have rejected nature-centric worldviews and ways of life, such as those practiced by Indigenous Peoples. This was partly due to discrimination and prejudice against Indigenous Peoples and partly due to "gatekeepers" resistance to the development model that promotes *buen vivir*.





That said, there has been a change in recent years. For example, the most recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) upheld that supporting self-determination and working with Indigenous Peoples to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge and land management practices can help address or even mitigate the crisis[20].

A PARADIGM SHIFT: EMBRACING BUEN VIVIR


The paradigm of *buen vivir* focuses on consuming goods and natural resources in a proportional and balanced manner. Human beings can achieve this balance by considering how they can return what nature has given them. For this reason, some Indigenous Peoples conduct ceremonies to thank and repay nature for what it offers them.

This way of thinking might be considered mere folklore or an exotic tradition from the past that is no longer relevant. However, Indigenous Peoples have proven that it is an essential tool to preserve the life not only of human beings but of the whole planet. *Buen vivir* is guided by Indigenous Peoples' conception of their territories as sacred. They aim to carry out actions that are not anthropocentric, but are centred on their territory—their place of origin.

Talking about *buen vivir* implies going back to the origin. The origin of life resides in the water, the mountains, the forests, the animals and the constant reconstruction of a harmonic and balanced relationship with nature. Returning to the origin means valuing the air, water, forests and territories as sacred. This approach acknowledges that the centre of norms does not emerge from human beings, but in nature. When Indigenous Peoples talk about going back to their origin, they are not referring to going back to the past in a linear view of time. They mean making peace with different living beings. Going back to the origin is the best innovation in these times of human uncertainty about the future of the planet.

In the same way, to be in harmony with *buen vivir* prevents injustice. One way to avoid injustices is to ensure that Indigenous Peoples are the ones speaking for themselves. One must avoid having non-Indigenous Peoples interpret what Indigenous Peoples want to say or do. Allowing interpretations by non-Indigenous Peoples is a way to perpetuate the same form of thinking as speaking for Indigenous Peoples or building concepts for Indigenous Peoples, such as resilience, conservation and environmental governance. The creation of these concepts prevents Indigenous Peoples' own narratives from emerging. Those actions nurture epistemological injustice that results not only from speaking and interpreting for others but also preventing Indigenous Peoples from having their voice.

On the other hand, one hears with greater force and impetus about the need to work in favor of sustainability. But what does society need to be sustainable? From the authors' perspective, the world's rulers are required to process three concepts and act accordingly to align with the suitability approach.



First, they should have the humility to recognise that the market paradigm focused on “*vivir mejor*” has been the leading cause of the planetary crisis. Therefore, looking for solutions in the same paradigm is contradictory. It takes humility to recognise and accept that our current way of life is failing and that Western science is not the only source of possible solutions.

Second, words of goodwill in international forums must be translated into concrete, participatory actions and recognition of cultural diversity within the States. Most importantly, being sustainable means going back to the origin, and that requires restoring the natural equilibrium and connection with nature and other non-human beings. Indigenous Peoples could contribute significantly to this reestablishment of our relationship with the Earth.

Third, if Indigenous Peoples are considered key allies to combat climate change, their rights must be respected. Biodiversity cannot be preserved, and the climate crisis cannot be addressed, unless land tenure rights and self-determination are recognised and respected. It is crucial to adopt a culturally appropriate and human rights-based approach that is then integrated into laws, policies, projects and the climate change agenda. The adoption of resolution 48/13 by the Human Rights Council is a positive step in this direction. It recognises that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right[21].

Indigenous Peoples’ ways of life and worldviews must be recognised, appreciated, and strengthened so that they can continue fulfilling their duty to care for life and can contribute to the fight against accelerated climate change and its consequences. We cannot squander the opportunity to see the issues of Indigenous Peoples and their role in a comprehensive and non-segmented way.

Within the framework of the paradigm shift, other specific actions are also necessary, such as **the urgency to coordinate actions in the United Nations**. The fight to address the human footprint on climate change requires efforts on all fronts: coordination, articulation, and complementarity are essential. All these efforts must be articulated and reinforced in favour of the achievement of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Multiple actions are already taking place within the framework of the United Nations, with Indigenous Peoples engaging in real and effective participation with initiatives such as the Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, the Decade of Indigenous Peoples’ Languages, the Coalition on Indigenous Peoples’ Food Systems, and the Conferences of Parties on climate change and biodiversity.


However, there is still a lack of communication between these actions, even though transversal guidelines orient them to provide solutions to global crises. For this reason, coordinated actions must be promoted. Interdependence and integrity are key principles that govern Indigenous Peoples’ worldviews: one does not talk about water without talking about territory, food systems, languages and ecosystems. Therefore, it is critical not to disconnect and treat the issues separately. Consequently, the invitation is to build synergies that include Indigenous Peoples in all these processes being developed at the UN to boost coherent results that aim at common objectives.



In the same way, **funds to halt climate change and biodiversity loss must be given directly to Indigenous Peoples.** Funding has been an essential instrument for some groups and nations to counter the effect of global warming; however, funding has yet to become a favoured solution for Indigenous Peoples. Instead, policies and public and private funding have been oriented towards strengthening the markets and facilitating efforts to extract natural resources that Indigenous Peoples have preserved for generations. These practices have resulted in severe injustices and socio-cultural, economic, and political pitfalls.

Today, we have a duty to reverse that trend and ensure that the purpose of aid and investments is to overcome these historical gaps. The appropriate way to do this is to ensure funds go directly to Indigenous Peoples, without intermediaries, and without generating more divisions and injustices. Similarly, funds should be oriented to strengthen building capacities and promote dialogues of knowledge with the peoples who have preserved nature for centuries for the benefit of humanity.

Within the framework of contributions for climate change, donors must increase funds and include Indigenous Peoples of the seven socio-cultural regions as beneficiaries[22]. All regions have biodiversity; therefore, the funding should not focus solely on biologically megadiverse countries. It is also crucial that they redefine the scope of their commitment so that funding is not just about forests and land tenure but also about strengthening Indigenous Peoples' self-determination, local economies and systems of governance.



Similarly, **it is urgent to stop criminalisation, killings, and attacks against Indigenous environmental rights defenders** [23]. The Permanent Forum is concerned about the constant murders, acts of violence, and harassment of Indigenous Peoples' human rights defenders, including Indigenous Women, in the context of resistance against mining and infrastructure projects. It has been recommended that States adopt the necessary measures to guarantee the rights, protection, and security of Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous leaders and Indigenous human rights defenders. The Permanent Forum has also recommended ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable for their acts and that victims are guaranteed access to justice and legal remedies [24].

Likewise, **it is key to ensure the participation of Indigenous Peoples**. Indigenous Peoples' full and effective participation in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating climate change and biodiversity loss mitigation and adaptation measures is crucial to increase their effectiveness[25].

Many Indigenous Peoples have emphasised for decades that when they ask for help, they sometimes mean they need to get the “helping” hands off them. One way of helping Indigenous Peoples is by letting them strengthen what they have preserved and reinforced for decades, such as their governance systems, languages, culture and environments. On the other hand, it is critical to reiterate the need to see nature as integral to and not separate from cultural diversity. Therefore, conservation and climate change policies must acknowledge that territories have not been preserved alone; Indigenous Peoples have played a key role in maintaining biodiversity due to their worldviews, knowledge, and close relation with their territories. In this regard, Member States, UN Agencies, and civil society should welcome meaningful participation by Indigenous Peoples and respect their right to free, prior and informed consent.



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