



Religions for Peace

# Marking 50 Years of Action

*Stockholm+50's Progress for Indigenous Peoples*

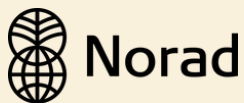
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# Foreword

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.

## Marking 50 Years of Action: Stockholm+50's Progress for Indigenous Peoples

Stockholm+50 was an international meeting to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCED)[1], which was held from 5-16 June 1972, in Stockholm, Sweden. It is known as the first world conference where environmental groups, scientists, and Indigenous leaders gathered to call attention to the world's environmental crisis and to demand that urgent action be taken to address it.

This document will briefly share information on the progress that has been made to recognise Indigenous Peoples as key actors in protecting the environment, current challenges that must be faced and partnerships between Indigenous Peoples and other key players that focus on these goals.

The key players include UN Agencies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO); Nordic governments (Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland) and the European Union (EU); the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); the World Bank; the Global Environment Facility (GEF); and private foundations.



## A HALF-CENTURY OF PROGRESS

It is important to note that Indigenous Peoples have used their voices effectively over the last 50 years to be recognised and to have their rights respected. Indigenous Peoples rights were recognised in 1992 at the Rio Summit, otherwise known as the Earth Summit. Since then, there has been steady progress:


- In 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recognised the role that Indigenous Peoples and local communities have played in conservation and sustainability in its preamble, Article 8 (j) and related provisions.
- In 1996, Indigenous Peoples created the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB). In the same year, Indigenous women created the Indigenous Women Biodiversity Network (IWBN) to promote the participation of Indigenous women in the CBD processes.
- In 2000, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was established.
- In 2007, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the the United Nations General Assembly.
- Progress has also been made on issues related to Indigenous Peoples' deep knowledge of biodiversity conservation. In a 2019 published report[2], the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) recognised that Indigenous Peoples and local communities possess significant knowledge about the state of biodiversity and ecosystem trends and play a key role in the environment assessments of states of biodiversity.

## MORE CHALLENGES EXIST

A constant demand made by Indigenous Peoples, in addition to rights recognition, is that adequate and accessible financing be made available to support their self-determined climate actions on the ground to combat climate change, desertification, and biodiversity loss. Unfortunately, there is still a gap, given that not many donors want to give funding directly to Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples have come up with strategies to address this issue.

Indigenous Peoples have developed a paper entitled “Principles and Guidelines for Direct Access Funding for Indigenous Peoples’ Climate Action, Biodiversity Conservation and Fighting Desertification for a Sustainable Planet[3].” This is just one document among others produced by Indigenous Peoples to address issues, such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent, support for enhancing their own institutions, and equitable sharing of any resources, such as biocultural community protocols.

Various institutions have made efforts to establish funding mechanisms that address this demand. However, a study[4]commissioned by Rainforest Foundation Norway noted that less than 1% of funding actually reaches Indigenous Peoples to secure tenure rights and manage forests in tropical countries.



Governments must also recognise the false dichotomy of developed and developing countries in regard to funding initiatives and actions directed to Indigenous Peoples. The reality of Indigenous Peoples is that we live across all types of bio-cultural regions and we all experience the same marginalisation from States. For Indigenous Peoples, it doesn't matter if we are located in developed or developing countries. Our ways of life are threatened because our rights to our territories and resources are not secured or respected.

Indigenous Peoples from around the world participated in the Stockholm+50 celebration in June 2022. They acknowledged that progress had been made regarding the recognition of the Indigenous Peoples' role in protecting the environment since the Stockholm Conference in June 1972. However, the Indigenous participants also noted that, despite some progress, humanity has not complied with the commitments made 50 years ago. The environmental crisis is now worse than it was in 1972. However, Indigenous Peoples are ready to be key players in taking the urgent and concrete action that is needed now.

### THE WAY FORWARD

Indigenous Peoples participants at the Stockholm+50 raise their voices on the way forward in its declaration[5] as follow:


*For centuries, Indigenous Peoples have endured many environmental challenges, including hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, wildfires, diseases, and droughts. We know about resistance and creativity. We keep our cultures, knowledge and food systems alive. We, Indigenous Peoples, are not inherently vulnerable people. We are strong people. But the systemic lack of recognition and respect of our rights, our culture and the discounting of our knowledge have placed us in situations of vulnerability.*

*Our Indigenous Peoples' institutions and scientific knowledge systems are based on our worldview that values the inextricable link between humans and nature. This has been the main safeguard of the environment and biodiversity for future generations. Passing on knowledge to new generations using our own language allows the transfer of complex concepts and creates conditions for continuous innovation. Our governance systems, anchored in participation, collective rights, social justice, equity, and inclusiveness, have kept conditions of social peace that is much needed for the evolution and innovation in our societies.*

*Based on our way of life, Indigenous Peoples in our territories occupy only 25% of the world's surface, yet they manage and sustain approximately 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity. We still have sustainable food systems in parts of the world where we have developed technology, knowledge and expertise to successfully deal with climate change. We know how to regenerate our soil, restore ecosystems and how to help the water cycle. We are delivering on our promise for living in harmony with nature. Now it is your turn.*

*Our own knowledge systems are often excluded from the design and implementation of conservation and climate change measures and programmes. Conservation is often done for us and around us, not with us. It is vital that we move in new directions.*





*Stockholm+50's recognition of Indigenous Peoples and our role in the human environment is encouraging, but it is just the beginning. We must keep the momentum. In the last fifty years, institutionalised scientific knowledge has been prioritised, but that alone can not solve the myriad of environmental challenges that humanity faces. Instead, scientific knowledge and Indigenous Peoples' knowledge must work and grow side by side as peers.*

*We, Indigenous Peoples, are ready to be full partners in the journey ahead. It is essential that you engage us as full participants in climate change, biodiversity and fight against desertification decision-making.*

*We, Indigenous women, have played a fundamental role as holders of collective scientific knowledge and technical skills for agriculture, sustainable food production, conservation, restoration, and the transfer of their knowledge over generations. It is essential to promote concrete steps that directly support and empower our commitment.*

*We, Indigenous youth, represent the present and future of our Indigenous Peoples. We play a key role in ensuring the continuity of our cosmogonic systems, scientific knowledge, languages, practices and ways of living. It is essential that you hear our voices and support our meaningful participation in decision-making processes that affect our future.*

*We, Indigenous Peoples, uphold the well-documented correlation between respect for our collective rights and protection of the environment. This includes the right to land, territory, natural resources, and effective conservation outcomes. Despite international commitments to protect our rights, they continue to be denied in practice. This puts successful conservation at risk, especially since too many of us who dare to fight for these rights and for the conservation of the natural resources suffer intimidation, harassment, stigmatisation, and criminalisation.*

*We welcomed the \$1.7 billion pledge in support of Indigenous Peoples made by governments and private funders at COP26 of the UNFCCC in Glasgow. However, even this large pledge does not adequately address the effects of climate change. We need a concerted effort that recognizes the interconnectedness of all life and encompasses all ecosystems impacted in the seven socio-cultural regions of the world.*

*We reaffirm that Indigenous Peoples are game-changers and guardians of biodiversity around the world. We are ready to participate with our practices, knowledge, expertise, and wisdom. We simply demand equity, equality and inclusiveness in the process. We will continue to do our part and to deliver on the promise of a truly sustainable planet. We stand in solidarity with our Indigenous Peoples and Nations to call upon States, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental development organisations, and international financial institutions, including public and private and civil society partners to:*

1. *Recognise the existence of Indigenous Peoples within their borders and in national legislation with respect to their collective rights to lands, territories and natural resources in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.*
2. *Ensure that Indigenous Peoples are consulted so that they can give their free, prior and informed consent when other organisations are formulating, adopting, implementing, and monitoring legislation, administrative measures, policies, programmes, investments, and projects involving their lands, territories, and resources—including the right to say no.*
3. *Guarantee adequate and effective participation by Indigenous Peoples when designing and implementing national plans for the transition to clean and green energy.*
4. *Stop the imposition of “protected areas” on Indigenous Peoples’ lands in the name of environmental protection without the Indigenous Peoples’ free, prior, and informed. Indigenous Peoples’ land, waters, and territories need to be recognised directly and as a category separate from Protected Areas or “Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures”, including recognition of the land rights of Indigenous women.*
5. *Call for protection and a halt to criminalisation and killings of Indigenous environmental rights defenders.*
6. *Respect the crucial role of languages, knowledge, and cultural heritage in the economic and entrepreneurial development of Indigenous Peoples.*
7. *Give attention to the role of Indigenous Peoples’ languages in the preservation of food and knowledge systems that are important to climate change adaptation and conservation strategies.*
8. *Request that the COP26 pledges are given to Indigenous Peoples from all seven sociocultural regions and redefine the scope of the funding to include not only forests and land tenure, but also work related to Indigenous Peoples’ self-determination, including building alliances, strengthening local economies, bolstering governance systems, and developing resource management strategies.*
9. *We urge more funding given directly to Indigenous Peoples’ seven sociocultural regions to protect biodiversity, fight climate change, and restore land and its various ecosystems, in accordance with the Paris Agreement Goal of 1.5, and to stop loss of our world’s biodiversity species and restore the land for food security and nutrition, in accordance with the 2030 agenda. We acknowledge the work to improve our present and save our future must be collaborative.*

In conclusion, humanity has not delivered on the promise of a sustainable future for all and time is running short. However, we can still create a world where humanity lives in harmony with nature if we work together.





## REFERENCES

- [1] More information at <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/stockholm1972>
- [2] More information at <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment>
- [3] More information at <https://assets.takeshape.io/86ce9525-f5f2-4e97-81ba-54e8ce933da7/dev/01375808-c4d4-412c-80a5-8a516e835976/Indigenous%20peoples%20-%20principles%20%26%20guidelines%20for%20direct%20access%20funding.pdf>
- [4] More information at [https://d516is0eze552.cloudfront.net/documents/Publikasjoner/Andre-rapporter/RFN\\_Falling\\_short\\_2021.pdf?mtime=20210412123104](https://d516is0eze552.cloudfront.net/documents/Publikasjoner/Andre-rapporter/RFN_Falling_short_2021.pdf?mtime=20210412123104)
- [5] More information at [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/40167/STOCKHOLM%2b50%20INDIGENOUS%20PEOPLES%20DECLARATION\\_FV.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/40167/STOCKHOLM%2b50%20INDIGENOUS%20PEOPLES%20DECLARATION_FV.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

**Lucy Mulenkei** is a Masai from Kenya. Ms. Mulenkei has many years of experience in community development with a focus on environmental issues, including work on the Conventions on Biological Diversity, Climate Change, Desertification, and others. She is also active in human rights; women and girls' rights, including reproductive health and education; and development that impacts Indigenous Peoples and their local communities. She has experience in advocacy at the local, national, regional, and international levels, and brings international discussions to the local level as the Executive Director of the Indigenous Information Network. As well as being a graduate of Gender and Development Studies from the University of Nairobi, she has studied areas such as journalism, project management, human rights-based approaches, leadership, and the environment, to name a few. Ms. Mulenkei is a member of a number of Boards and Co-founder of a number of Indigenous Peoples Networks, among them the African Indigenous Women's Organisation, the International Indigenous Women's Forum, the Indigenous Women Biodiversity Network, and the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity. She has also been working with other Indigenous Peoples as a member of the advisory group for the Global Environment Facility. She was also a Member of the High-Level Commission (HLC) at the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25 Follow-up, for an initial period of three years, and was recently appointed as a Member and Co-Chair of the UNEP Advisory Group on Ecosystem Restoration.

**Dr. Viviana Figueroa** is an Omaguaca Indigenous, Jujuy, from Argentina. She is a member of the management team of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, member of the management team of the Argentinian Indigenous Youth Association, member of the management team of the Indigenous Women Network on Biodiversity, and member of the Indigenous and Local Knowledge Task Force of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Viviana has a degree in International Public Law and a Ph.D. in Law, all from the School of Law, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina.



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