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Summary of the World Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nature: 8-10 October 2025

“This Summit is a promise that Indigenous voices will not only be heard but help guide the future of conservation.” This statement by Razan Khalifa Al Mubarak, President, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), highlighted the importance of the first ever in-person World Summit for Indigenous Peoples and Nature, focused on Our Traditional Knowledge is the Language of Mother Earth, and organized as part of the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025.

The historic Indigenous Summit made clear that Indigenous Peoples are the stewards of life on Earth. As knowledge keepers, guardians of ancestral territories, and visionaries of sustainability, they are central to any conservation effort. The Summit created a space “to listen, learn, and connect with one another,” underscoring challenges and opportunities for the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making fora, which is crucial for a sustainable future.

Over the three days of the Summit, traditional ceremonial openings by Indigenous “nanas and tatas” offered a reminder of “the deep spiritual connections Indigenous Peoples hold to the Earth” and ancestors. Vocal and instrumental performances highlighted the intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge.

Discussions during the high-level segment revealed the enormous contributions to conservation by Indigenous Peoples and emphasized that Indigenous priorities need to shape national plans and international frameworks. Indigenous representatives highlighted the need to “change the way we interact with nature,” and called for the Summit to move from promises to action.

Participants further focused on:

- the path from the last IUCN Congress in Marseille in 2021 to Abu Dhabi;
- Indigenous leadership in global policy, addressing the links between Indigenous and Traditional Territories (ITTs) and biodiversity conservation; and
- redefining the climate narrative.

In addition, during the first ever Indigenous Pavilion, participants engaged in a series of talks which addressed issues such as:

- the need for direct access to finance for Indigenous Peoples;
- the reshaping of inclusive financial systems;

- paths to reconciliation in Indigenous lands, including co-stewardship of Indigenous lands;
- Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations’ (IPOs) engagement at the IUCN Members General Assembly;
- traditional knowledge, conservation of bio-cultural diversity, and spatial planning;
- the role of Indigenous women in water governance; and
- lessons learned from the PODONG Indigenous Peoples Initiative.

The World Summit for Indigenous Peoples and Nature convened from 8-10 October 2025 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE), attracting more than 300 participants.

A Brief History of the World Summit of Indigenous Peoples

The World Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nature has been decades in the making. IUCN was established in 1948 as an independent scientific organization to “influence, encourage, and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature,” and to ensure any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. However, for the

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first decades of its existence, IUCN did not formally recognize Indigenous Peoples within its structure. This began to change in 1975, with Indigenous issues becoming the focus of some 159 Resolutions adopted by IUCN Members since then. A significant milestone was IUCN's endorsement of the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP) in 2008.

In 2016, IUCN altered its structure for the first time in its history by creating a membership category for Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs). This increased Indigenous Peoples' visibility within the Union and enabled IPOs to sponsor motions for resolutions for the IUCN Assembly's consideration. IPO Members met as a group for the first time in 2018 and developed a self-determined strategy, identifying joint priorities for advancing Indigenous rights and issues in conservation and within IUCN.

World Summit of Indigenous Peoples at the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2021: IPOs participated in the IUCN World Conservation Congress as IPO Members for the first time in Marseille, France, in 2021. It included the first IUCN World Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nature, held in a hybrid format. At this Summit, Indigenous representatives agreed on a [Global Indigenous Agenda for the Governance of Indigenous Lands, Territories, Waters, Coastal Seas, and Natural Resources](#). The holding of this event set a precedent for the first in-person Indigenous Summit in Abu Dhabi, which also included an Indigenous Pavilion showcasing many achievements of, and challenges for, Indigenous Peoples.

World Summit of Indigenous Peoples Report

On Wednesday, 8 October, Anita Tzec, Maya Yucatec leader from Belize and Senior Programme Manager on Indigenous Peoples and Conservation, IUCN, opened the first ever in-person World Summit for Indigenous Peoples and Nature Summit, calling it a space "to listen, learn, and connect with one another."

Ramiro Batzin, Vice President, IUCN, and Co-Chair, International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB), stressed that traditional knowledge is the voice of Mother Earth and that conservation for Indigenous Peoples is "about rights, knowledge, land, transformation, life, our environment." He then presented the Summit's agenda.



Razan Khalifa Al Mubarak, IUCN President, and Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri, Secretary General, Environment Agency, Abu Dhabi, UAE



WHAIA Sonic Weaver offering a vocal and instrumental performance to open the Summit

A traditional ceremonial spiritual opening by Indigenous "nanas and tatas" from Mesoamerica and Africa offered blessings and positive energy for the Summit's proceedings and participants.

WHAIA - Sonic Weaver, a transcendent vocalist, alchemical performer, and First Nations multi-instrumentalist of Ngāti Kahungunu, Māori descent, offered a performance highlighting the intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge.

High-Level Segment

Razan Khalifa Al Mubarak, IUCN President, underscored that the first in-person World Summit for Indigenous Peoples is a historic moment and a promise that Indigenous voices will not only be heard but help guide the future of conservation. She stressed that "this remarkable gathering" offers the opportunity to share the message that "nature is not a commodity but an identity, source of life, culture, and belonging." She concluded emphasizing that "inspiration and aspiration are not enough," because Indigenous priorities need to shape national plans and international frameworks.

Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri, Secretary General, Environment Agency, Abu Dhabi, UAE, underscored that the traditional ceremonial opening of the Summit is a "reminder of the deep spiritual connections Indigenous Peoples hold to the Earth, reaffirming why we are here." She highlighted the enormous contributions of Indigenous Peoples to conservation, noting their knowledge, based on centuries of observation and practices, is living science. She concluded by saying the Summit sends a powerful message of respect and hope for people and nature.

Grethel Aguilar, Director General, IUCN, stressed that achieving conservation in these challenging times is not possible without respecting and upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples. She explained that organizing the first World Summit for Indigenous Peoples is "a truly special moment," because "only by listening carefully to others can one learn." Aguilar said "Indigenous Peoples' wisdom, knowledge, and courage need to be at the center of everything we do," recognizing that Indigenous Peoples are defending their rights and lands, often risking their lives. She stated that "we will stand with you" through the initiatives built together.



Grethel Aguilar, Director General, IUCN

Sonia Guajajara, Minister of Indigenous Peoples, Brazil, via video, stressed that the Summit is a crucial space for Indigenous Peoples to highlight and share their ancient knowledge and advocate for the protection of their territories, governance, and ancestral science. Noting that once the Earth's limits are exceeded, predicting the full range of changes that will occur is difficult. She emphasized that "we need to change the way we interact with nature" as technological innovations cannot address the challenges alone. Guajajara stressed the need to guarantee Indigenous rights to their lands, territories, and resources, based on Indigenous science and worldviews.

Puyr Temb , First Secretary, Indigenous Peoples of the State of Par , Brazil, announced that "people finally realize that the future is with the Indigenous Peoples." Observing that Western science had "caused hunger to the Earth" while Indigenous Peoples were considered "primitive," she said climate and biodiversity solutions can only be achieved if Indigenous Peoples' knowledge is taken on board. She noted a significant proportion of the world's protected forest lies within Indigenous lands.

Kerry Max, Deputy Director, Partnering for Climate, Global Affairs Canada, expressed Canada's pride in supporting this Indigenous Summit. He noted Canada's role in funding the longtime sustainers of biodiversity, calling for Indigenous Peoples' access to needed resources, including for women and youth, without delay or compromise. He advocated moving from consultation to co-creation through initiatives co-designed and co-led by Indigenous Peoples. He commended the PODONG initiative's work to restructure finance and urged carrying the momentum forward.

Niila-Juh n Valkeap  , Vice-Chair, Youth Council of the S mi Parliament, Finland, criticized projects that have destroyed Indigenous livelihoods, saying the S mi way of life is about protecting nature. He noted the scientific value of S mi knowledge and urged that Indigenous youth be trusted as full partners, with funding for their solutions to the biodiversity and climate crises. He called for this Summit to move from promises to action, with Indigenous leadership to truly sustain the world.

Lucy Mulenkei, Co-Chair, IIFB, and Executive Director, Indigenous Information Network (IIN), urged inclusivity and partnership because Indigenous Peoples cannot do everything alone. She noted that the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) targets help ensure forward movement. She urged continuous support for the [PODONG Peoples Initiative](#), named after the word for "basket" in the Marma language of Bangladesh, and stressed work with the private sector on the [Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures](#) (TNFD).

From Marseille to Abu Dhabi

On Wednesday, 8 October, a panel discussion focused on the path from the last IUCN Congress, in Marseille in 2021, to the current one taking place in Abu Dhabi. It addressed, among other things, the evolving participation of Indigenous Peoples in IUCN's governance system and implementation of the [IUCN Global Indigenous Agenda for the Governance of Indigenous Lands, Territories, Waters, Coastal Seas and Natural Resources](#).

Kristen Walker, Chair, IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy, noted that the IUCN Global Indigenous Agenda "is much more than a declaration, representing our shared commitment." She described the process undertaken to strengthen Indigenous participation across IUCN governance structures. Walker underscored that, since Marseille, new initiatives have emerged, such as the [Inclusive Conservation Initiative](#) (ICI) under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the [PODONG Indigenous Peoples Initiative](#).

Ramiro Batzin gave an overview of the engagement of Indigenous organizations with IUCN, discussing challenges and progress made toward the full recognition of the role and contributions of Indigenous Peoples. He stressed the importance of Indigenous participation in decision-making fora and highlighted the need for active participation of all rights holders.

Anita Tzec focused on IUCN's programme on Indigenous Peoples and conservation, stressing that achievements would not be possible without the day-to-day support of Indigenous leaders. She highlighted that IUCN membership has risen from 26 Indigenous Members in Marseille to 41 in Abu Dhabi. Tzec underscored Indigenous Peoples' self-determined strategy and workplan, highlighting the need to: upscale direct and inclusive finance for biodiversity conservation and climate action;



L-R: **Anita Tzec**, Maya Yucatec leader from Belize and Senior Programme Manager on Indigenous Peoples and Conservation, IUCN; **Ramiro Batzin**, Vice President, IUCN, and Co-Chair, IIFB; and **Andrea Carmen**, Yaqui Nation, International Indian Treaty Council

strengthen capacities and empower Indigenous leadership; and build long-term alliances, including with the private sector.

Graciela Coy, Ak' Tenamit Association, Chair, IUCN National Committee of Members, Guatemala, presented on progress across the five implementation areas of the [IUCN Global Indigenous Agenda](#). She highlighted binding public policies, progress on forest management and related incentives, and participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making spaces at all levels. She also addressed land legalization, youth training and capacity building, recognition of traditional governance structures, and the transmission and sharing of intergenerational traditional knowledge.

Andrea Carmen, Yaqui Nation, International Indian Treaty Council, noted “false solutions” include groundwater contamination from a lithium mine in Sonora, Mexico, and tar sands leakage in Alberta, Canada. She pointed to Indigenous wisdom that coal should stay in the ground as “the water filter of Mother Earth” and urged transitioning to sustainable food production.

Lucy Mullenkei recalled past disputes between Indigenous Peoples and the IUCN over issues such as mining, but emphasized that “people learned to work together.” She lamented limited participation from Africa and called on governments to: consider Indigenous Peoples from a human rights perspective; ensure their rights to their lands and territories; and implement the principle of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC).

Erica McCreedy, North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance Ltd. (NAILSMA), stressed the need for: direct financial flows and investments for Indigenous Peoples; identification of benefits of projects and partnerships for Indigenous Peoples; and empowering youth. She noted challenges include systemic barriers caused by failing to recognize Indigenous sovereignty and knowledge systems and disproportionately low funding per hectare for Indigenous lands.

Discussing IUCN’s 20-year vision, Peter Michael Cochrane, Vice President, IUCN, stressed that it offers an overarching direction to complement the [four-year programme of work 2026-2029](#), which is under discussion with a view to adoption at the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025. He highlighted key messages, including on:

- scaling up resilient and sustainable conservation actions;
- addressing biodiversity loss through eight transformational areas;
- driving change through six catalytic roles IUCN plays in nature conservation; and
- developing a stronger and more resilient financial model.

Cochrane addressed three impact areas, namely: effectively conserving biodiversity; addressing the interconnectedness between biodiversity, water, food, health, and climate change; and advancing a more just and equitable society.

Stewart Maginnis, Deputy Director General, IUCN, focused on IUCN’s Programme for 2026-2029, noting it represents IUCN’s operational framework to realize its 20-year vision. He discussed impacts and outcomes, highlighting the “people pathway” and stressing the importance of equity and justice for sound environmental governance. Among outputs, Maginnis highlighted the need to recognize, respect, and promote the rights, agency, and stewardship of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including environmental defenders, throughout the Programme. He stressed: equitable approaches to monitoring; focusing on capacity building, equitable decision making, and inclusivity; providing materials, tools, and guidance; promoting the uptake of a range of educational approaches; and reflecting traditional and Indigenous knowledge in the framing of nature-based solutions.

Indigenous Leadership in Global Policy: ITTs and Biodiversity Conservation

This session, moderated by Lucy Mullenkei, tackled Indigenous leadership in global policy, addressing, among other things, how ITTs contribute to biodiversity conservation and why this is important.

Joënia Wapichana, President, National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples (FUNAI), Brazil, said her previous position as the first Indigenous woman member of parliament in Brazil shows that Indigenous Peoples are capable of leadership. She noted Brazil’s proposal for and investment in the Tropical Forests Forever Facility, which will help fund the protection of Indigenous lands.

Ambassador Mher Margaryan, Permanent Mission of Armenia to the UN, said the GBF provides a framework for honoring



Peter Michael Cochrane, Vice President, IUCN



Joënia Wapichana, President, FUNAI, Brazil

Indigenous knowledge and practices under Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). He noted that a new Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) (SB8j) will meet from 27-30 October 2025 in Panama to strengthen the legal framework on Indigenous lands and territories.

In the ensuing panel discussion, Viviana Figueroa, Associate Programme Officer, CBD Secretariat, and IIFB, explained that GBF Target 3 on conserving 30% of land, waters, and sea recognizes ITTs. She explained that under the new Programme of Work on Article 8(j) adopted at CBD COP 16, the new SB8j will discuss relevant guidelines, along with: international standards for the recognition of ITTs, including land title and governance systems; funding for the continuing contributions of traditional knowledge on biodiversity restoration, and conservation; and the key roles of women, children, and youth.

Olivier Rukundo, Head, Peoples and Biodiversity Unit, CBD Secretariat, highlighted the GBF's adoption and the establishment of SB8j during COP 16 in October 2024. He emphasized that the new programme of work for Article 8(j) was developed in alignment with the GBF and will directly impact the GBF's implementation. Rukundo also drew attention to the guidelines for the inclusion and consideration of traditional lands and resource use in spatial planning processes and environmental impact assessments.

Adriana Goncalves Moreira, Lead, Partnerships Division, GEF, emphasized that the GEF remains, 33 years after its establishment, the largest multilateral grant fund. She provided an overview of flagship programmes and projects relevant to Indigenous Peoples, as well as Indigenous Peoples' inclusion in the GEF's architecture and governance. She highlighted, among other things, the ICI, the process to operationalize the GBF Fund with 20% of the funds going to Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and local projects in Brazil, Kenya, and Peru.

In the ensuing discussion, participants discussed ways to: build capacities of Indigenous communities for submitting quality proposals for GEF projects; strengthen Indigenous voices at the policy level; and reinforce on-the-ground implementation.



L-R: **Olivier Rukundo**, Head, Peoples and Biodiversity Unit, CBD Secretariat; **Viviana Figueroa**, Associate Programme Officer, CBD Secretariat, and IIFB; **Amb. Mher Margaryan**, Permanent Mission of Armenia to the UN; **Joënia Wapichana**, President, FUNAI, Brazil; **Adriana Goncalves Moreira**, Lead, Partnerships Division, GEF; and Moderator **Lucy Mullenkei** Co-Chair, IIFB, and Executive Director, IIN

Redefining the Climate Narrative: Indigenous Leadership in Global Policy Transformation

This session, moderated by Verónica Ruiz García, Senior Manager, Climate, Nature and People, IUCN, highlighted the importance of the “people component” in addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Panelists further discussed Indigenous Peoples' priorities and key positions for negotiations at the 30th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which will meet in Belém, Brazil, from 10 to 21 November 2025.

Puyr Tembé called for providing equal footing regarding the involvement and participation of Indigenous Peoples in the COPs of multilateral environmental agreements, including the UNFCCC. He urged breaking the silos and providing direct funding to Indigenous Peoples.

Emphasizing that Indigenous Peoples' leadership is crucial to transform public policy on climate change, Onel Masardule, Executive Director, Foundation for the Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge, offered numerous examples showcasing that Indigenous knowledge can support climate solutions. He called for “decolonizing policies,” allowing Indigenous Peoples' participation in decision making, and empowering them to develop their own customary laws and transformative policies.

Eileen Mairena Cunningham, UNFCCC Indigenous Peoples' Focal Point, highlighted that appropriate actions are to:

- stop considering biodiversity and climate change in silos;
- regard Indigenous Peoples not only as beneficiaries but as partners in an equal relationship;
- undertake capacity building of Indigenous Peoples on requirements for financing;
- explore co-financing on biodiversity and climate action;
- learn lessons from Indigenous Peoples' on-the-ground sustainability initiatives to enhance governance systems; and
- affirm at UNFCCC COP 30 that Indigenous Peoples' self-determination should be amplified through land rights and direct access to funds.



Eileen Mairena Cunningham, UNFCCC Indigenous Peoples' Focal Point, and **Onel Masardule**, Executive Director, Foundation for the Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge



Alfredo Daniel Redondo, Nature Team Lead, Climate Champions Team

Alfredo Daniel Redondo, Nature Team Lead, Climate Champions Team, highlighted Indigenous knowledge and stressed Indigenous Peoples are the ones who feel climate change impacts the most. He said the [Global Data Study on Indigenous Peoples' Climate Contributions](#) shows that forests, biodiversity, and ecosystems thrive where Indigenous Peoples' rights are respected. He encouraged coupling Indigenous knowledge with science, data, and technology.

Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, Chairman, Climate Crisis Commission, IUCN, and Global Leader of Climate and Energy, World Wide Fund for Nature, recommended strengthening the climate agenda by reinforcing Indigenous participation, through:

- protecting multilateralism;
- fostering Indigenous participation in the Paris Agreement; and
- changing the climate narrative to reconnect with people.

He highlighted: the International Court of Justice's July 2025 [advisory opinion on the obligations of States in respect of climate change](#); the need for reference to Indigenous rights in Brazil's preparations for a [Global Ethical Stocktake](#) for UNFCCC COP 30; the need for a subsidiary body on Indigenous issues under the UNFCCC; recognition by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of the importance of traditional knowledge; and the need for more Indigenous participation in the negotiation process on indicators for the Paris Agreement's Global Goal on Adaptation.

In the ensuing discussion, panelists noted that:

- gender and climate in the Indigenous context is still a pending issue;
- to achieve their goals, groups should work together rather than succumbing to competition between agendas and interest groups;
- women, as those most impacted by climate change, must be at the center of debates at UNFCCC COPs, as well equipped with financing and technological capacity for immediate solutions; and
- Indigenous territories offer a solution to climate change and political transformation.



L-R: **Ramiro Batzin**, Vice President, IUCN, and Co-Chair, IIFB; **Anita Tzec**, Maya Yucatec leader from Belize and Senior Programme Manager on Indigenous Peoples and Conservation, IUCN; **Aroha Te Pareake Mead**, Maori researcher; and **Lucy Mullenkei**, Co-Chair, IIFB, and Executive Director, IIN

Grand Opening and Inauguration of the Home of Indigenous Peoples

On Thursday, 9 October, Anita Tzec welcomed everyone to the first ever IUCN Indigenous Pavilion, which opened with a spiritual invocation offered by the “nanas and tatas.”

Grethel Aguilar highlighted the importance of the Indigenous Pavilion, thanking Canada, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the European Commission, and Indigenous leaders involved in putting the Pavilion together. Observing that 41 Indigenous organizations have IUCN Member badges, she recalled the difficult journey toward this achievement. She urged everyone to consider joining IUCN to move the Indigenous conservation agenda even further forward.

Ramiro Batzin recalled it took the Indigenous community 20 years to “push the IUCN door open.” Noting 80% of biodiversity conservation takes place in Indigenous territories even though Indigenous Peoples comprise only 5% of the global population, he called for a target that, in four years, 80% of IUCN members will be Indigenous.

Exclaiming that “it is wonderful to find ourselves a home,” Lucy Mullenkei stressed IIFB's appreciation for the support received toward this historic milestone, adding that the Pavilion offers a space for all to interact.

Kerry Max stressed Canada's commitment regarding reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples after decades of abusive relationships. He underscored the need to: convey the messages stemming from the Indigenous Summit and Pavilion to donors, governments, and institutions; and ensure direct funding for Indigenous Peoples without intermediaries, delays, or compromises.

WHAIA Sonic Weaver, along with Erick Terena, Maraka Music (Brazil), and Gavin Singleton, Dawul Wuru Aboriginal Corporation (Australia), offered a vocal and instrumental performance reminding participants of our connections with the physical and spiritual world.

Anthony Goldner, Chief Executive Officer, TNFD, highlighted efforts to build bridges between business and finance actors on

the one hand and Indigenous leaders and communities on the other. Lamenting the poor track record of private companies with regard to nature protection and engagement with Indigenous Peoples, he stressed that work starts with dialogue to understand each other's perspectives. Highlighting TNFD's guidance manual on how business and finance can engage Indigenous communities more effectively, he called for companies to acknowledge the impact they have on the planet and disclose the relevant information.

Erica McCreedy underscored that "everything is connected through the Pachamama." She highlighted the need to strengthen Indigenous voices and build partnerships, both to achieve targets and goals and to improve livelihoods and protect Mother Earth.

The Pavilion's opening ceremony ended with a symbolic ribbon cutting.

Indigenous Talks

Indigenous Peoples' Direct Access to Finance for Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Actions: This session took place on Thursday, 9 October, and was moderated by Anita Tzec. It highlighted Indigenous-led financing models and their impact, with calls for more financial systems built with and for Indigenous Peoples to ensure just and lasting climate and biodiversity outcomes.

Sara Omi Casamá, Chair, Coordinating Committee of Territorial Women Leaders of Mesoamerica and Indigenous leader, Emberá people, Panama, underscored resource mobilization for biodiversity conservation in Central America, particularly for young women. She said internal community work is needed to amplify women's voices, given the prevailing culture of machismo and violence against women. She stressed that action ultimately depends on resources, but few resources arrive at the local level, and women have even less access to them.

Paine Mako, Executive Director, Ujamaa Community Resource Team (UCRT), Tanzania, reported on work toward reducing the rate of pastoralists' loss of land. She highlighted difficulty in raising funds for the programme despite its positive impacts. She noted the intermediaries who usually receive donors' large disbursements have decision-making power over how much UCRT gets, so the ultimate beneficiaries get a small

fraction of the funds disbursed. She pointed to the Indigenous-led PODONG Initiative, which has helped bridge that gap by: responding to community priorities; supporting Indigenous governance and management of land and natural resources; and working to ensure Indigenous Peoples' collective land titles.

Indigenous Leadership and the Reshaping of Inclusive Financial Systems for Biodiversity and Climate: This session, moderated by Lucy Mullenkei, explored effective biodiversity finance models, remaining barriers, and the policy shifts needed to ensure equitable, sustainable resource flows, inclusive and direct finance for Indigenous Peoples, and Indigenous-led stewardship.

Eleni Kyrou, Head of Sustainability and Inclusion, Green Climate Fund (GCF), highlighted the GCF's mandate to channel financial flows to developing countries to tackle climate change challenges, acting on a 50/50 basis regarding adaptation and mitigation. Noting that climate finance has historically moved in a top-down fashion, with local communities at the end of the line, she lamented that Indigenous leadership and knowledge are often overlooked, and Indigenous Peoples are not treated as equal partners. Kyrou highlighted the GCF policy on Indigenous Peoples, noting it is much more than a safeguard mechanism. She emphasized that much work remains to make financial streams accessible to Indigenous Peoples through a collaborative design approach.

Anthony Goldner acknowledged that the discussion on finance systems inclusive of Indigenous Peoples touches upon core issues such as FPIC, data recognition and sovereignty, respect for Indigenous Peoples' intellectual property, and implementation of the CBD's [Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing](#). He drew attention to the TNFD's [Guidance on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and affected stakeholders](#), and a case study on [TNFD, LEAP, and Indigenous Enterprises: Impacts and Opportunities](#).

Anita Tzec offered insights from the PODONG Initiative, stemming from the recognition that Indigenous knowledge and leadership must be at the core to achieve the goals and targets of the GBF. She described the process of co-designing the initiative with IUCN, saying 85% of the resources goes directly



Paine Mako, Executive Director, UCRT, Tanzania



Anthony Goldner, Chief Executive Officer, TNFD

to Indigenous Peoples and their territories, ensuring Indigenous leadership. Tzec underscored that PODONG further aims to attract investments to strengthen the financial, administrative, and technical capabilities of Indigenous organizations, educate the donor community, empower a new cohort of Indigenous leaders, and co-design a financial mechanism for on-the-ground implementation.

Ramson Siny Karmushu, IIFB and Founder, My Indigenous Knowledge in Action, Kenya, highlighted the biodiversity finance gap of USD 700 billion per year, lamenting only 1% of existing funds reaches Indigenous Peoples on the ground. He stressed the need for: direct access to funds; reliability and consistency of funds; funds for inclusive landscapes; and moving from small grants dedicated to Indigenous Peoples to more substantive ones. Karmushu emphasized bureaucratic problems leading to delays regarding implementation on the ground and challenges related to weak governance and intermediaries.

Daniel Mabengo, Project Manager, National Alliance for the Support and Promotion of Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas, Democratic Republic of the Congo (ANAPAC-DRC), said ANAPAC, an Indigenous organization, designed and ran an on-the-ground project that produced mapping of the territory, advocacy to the government, strengthened governance in Indigenous communities, and improved livelihoods for women and youth.

Claudia Soares Baré, Secretary Director, Podáali - Brazilian Amazon Indigenous Fund, said Podáali disburses climate funding directly to Indigenous Peoples. She said it differs from other climate funding as it is more concerned about relationships, solidarity, and responsibility than about numbers, metrics, and carbon. She noted Podáali's interest in not only money but also autonomy, highlighting that recipients now have the confidence to develop projects and see themselves as the caretakers of the Amazonia's biodiversity. Being created by and for Indigenous Peoples, she said 100% of Podáali's resources go to the Indigenous communities, who decide where they should be used, and that even those communities where money has no value get their fair share of material goods.

In the ensuing discussion, participants discussed the work of the TNFD, with Anthony Goldner reporting that its work is intended for voluntary adoption, and 620 organizations are now using the recommendations of the Task Force.

Paths to Reconciliation in Indigenous Lands: Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs): This session, moderated by Verónica Ruiz García, took place on Friday, 10 October. It explored how IPCAs advance reconciliation by centering Indigenous rights, knowledge, and governance, and how Indigenous-led stewardship strengthens both ecological integrity and cultural values, fostering equality, resilience, and inclusive governance.

Rosanne Casimir, Board of Directors, British Columbia Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), said the 204 First Nation communities in the BCAFN still struggle from the colonial systems “meant to break us so our land and resources could be taken.” She mentioned such systems as tariffs and trade policies



Ramson Siny Karmushu, IIFB and Founder, My Indigenous Knowledge in Action, Kenya

that limit First Nations' access to markets and fast-tracked “development” that often ignores FPIC. She cited some cases of reconciliation, which she said requires justice, restitution, return of power to Indigenous Peoples, and full implementation of the UNDRIP.

Barry Hunter, NAILSMA, reported that Indigenous protected areas represent more than 53% of Australia's National Reserve System, with 93 of these areas managed by First Nations covering 106 million hectares of land and six million hectares of sea. He commended the Australian government's recognition of Indigenous Peoples' land management, and called for further reconciliation, citing disparities in funding for Indigenous protected areas *versus* other protected areas. He questioned whether the Australian government should count Indigenous protected areas toward meeting its global biodiversity targets, and called for more accountability and equity.

Moderator Ruiz Garcia closed the session, noting that Indigenous Peoples are now shaping their own narrative. She stressed that transformation is possible, but that it requires respect and trust among everyone in a whole-of-society approach.

Beyond Consultation: Co-Stewardship As a Path to Reconciliation: Focusing on respecting Indigenous rights and knowledge to transform conservation approaches, the session



Verónica Ruiz García, Senior Manager, Climate, Nature and People, IUCN



Kristen Walker-Painemilla, Senior Vice President of Inclusive Finance, Conservation International

explored how IUCN can advance reconciliation through genuine Indigenous-led co-stewardship.

Moderator Kristen Walker-Painemilla, Senior Vice President of Inclusive Finance, Conservation International, reminded participants of the [IUCN Resolution on the Renunciation of the Doctrine of Discovery to Rediscover Care for Mother Earth](#). She explained that it mandates the Council to start a discussion on the history of IUCN, truth and reconciliation, and co-stewardship and co-governance with Indigenous Peoples.

Kevin Chang, Executive Director, Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo, Hawaii, emphasized that the doctrine of discovery touches upon the rhetoric of truth and reconciliation. He stressed that the first step for reconciliation is understanding what it is, followed by changing the conservation mindset. He urged further discussion on the history and role of the doctrine of discovery, including on the founding of IUCN.

Vivian Silole, Project Manager, IMPACT Kenya ICI, underscored that the initiative started to redefine conservation, which had been perceived as something external to local communities rather than linked to their way of life. She highlighted movement-building from the ground up and modeling the initiative so it can apply to any form of conservation practice. She discussed the initiative's annual stakeholder forum and the principles of inclusive conservation, underscoring that the initiative offers not a competing form of conservation but a complementary one.

Joan Carling, Executive Director, Indigenous Peoples Rights International, highlighted the doctrine of discovery as the first form of land grab, a mechanism of colonization of Indigenous Peoples "where our lands were under the control of those in power," including through the designation of national parks and conservation areas. She emphasized the need to "decolonize our approach to conservation," by: providing legal recognition to lands and resources protected by Indigenous Peoples; respecting Indigenous Peoples' governance systems; and ensuring a rights-based approach that is culturally and gender sensitive.

Stressing that "talking about reconciliation is talking about discrimination and racism," Ramiro Batzin noted that "if we talk about reconciliation, we have to accept there was a violation

of rights" and acknowledge past mistakes as individuals, institutions, and programmes. He stressed that recognizing the contributions of Indigenous Peoples on conservation, alongside their collective rights and governance systems, is part of the reconciliation process. Batzin concluded that conservation measures must respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and FPIC.

Regarding the establishment of an IUCN working group on truth and reconciliation, panelists stressed the need to:

- ensure equitable representation and participation by Indigenous Peoples;
- change practices and reform policies on the ground, acknowledging past mistakes;
- ensure adequate resources;
- develop an inventory of best practices;
- work toward a rights-based approach to conservation and development;
- use UNDRIP as a starting and reference point; and
- develop intercultural programmes, ensuring that traditional knowledge is treated on an equal footing.

Indigenous Peoples' Organizations (IPOs): Our Engagement at the IUCN Members General Assembly:

Ramiro Batzin moderated this session on Friday, 10 October, explaining how IUCN motions are adopted as resolutions. He introduced three motions developed by IUCN IPO Members over the past year. He cautioned that many earlier IUCN motions have lacked implementation or follow-up, advising participants developing motions to always include an implementation plan.

Ana Gabriela Díaz Banegas, Sotz'il Association, Guatemala, presented a motion calling for non-proliferation of fossil fuels, saying their phaseout is key to protecting biodiversity and Indigenous territories. She urged Indigenous Peoples to actively fight climate change, including within the UNFCCC, as it threatens to become the leading cause of biodiversity loss and directly affect Indigenous and local communities. She said the motion calls for: recognizing Indigenous Peoples as key actors; protecting territories and sacred areas from fossil fuel expansion; aligning the climate and biodiversity agendas; and channeling resources toward Indigenous community initiatives.



Ana Gabriela Díaz Banegas, Sotz'il Association, Guatemala

Fany Kuiru Castro, General Coordinator, Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), detailed a motion to restore 80% of the Amazon by 2030. She explained its importance for all life on Earth because of its ecological regulatory function. She said the motion must avert a 25% loss of the Amazon that would entail an irreversible biodiversity loss. Noting causes of deforestation and degradation include monoculture planting, logging, narcotraffic, and illegal mining, she announced that the motion was already approved.

Huihui Kanahale-Mossman, Executive Director, Edith Kanaka'ole Foundation, Hawaii, presented a motion recognizing the importance of Indigenous language and cultural heritage for biodiversity conservation. She described Indigenous Peoples' puzzlement over the "colonized world's" separation of natural resources and language, saying "our language is of the land." She said language's importance is mentioned in CBD Article 8(j) and is crucial for land stewardship.

Traditional Knowledge, Conservation of Bio-cultural Diversity, and Spatial Planning: This session, moderated by Claudia Valeria Sánchez Flores, Indigenous Women's Network on Biodiversity in Latin America and the Caribbean, was held on Friday, 10 October, and focused on the use of traditional knowledge and customary systems for spatial planning and resource management.

With a background in the geography of inequality, and studying how some groups have power and resources while others do not, David Gadsden, Director of Conservation Solutions, Environmental Systems Research Institute, focused on geographic information systems and opportunities to explore with Indigenous Peoples how to appropriately unlock Indigenous knowledge in the form of digital maps. Underscoring that maps have historically been used against Indigenous communities, he highlighted, using examples, the importance of data sovereignty and the need for Indigenous ownership regarding the use of technological tools in terms of governance, rules, and access.

Ricardo Camilo Niño, Indigenous Technical Secretary, National Commission for Indigenous Territories, Colombia, said that 934 Indigenous reservations exist at the national level, noting they represent 30% of the national territory and are a way to recognize collective tenure of land for Indigenous Peoples. Emphasizing that territory is the most important of all Indigenous rights, he urged moving forward with a legal framework on the identification of Indigenous territories as a way for Indigenous Peoples to reinforce their autonomy.

Fred Loure Parmelo, Ujamaa Community Resource Team, Tanzania, focused on the Ujamaa model for communal land security, which builds on the principles of the historical Tanzanian Ujamaa (familyhood) policy to legally secure land rights for communal groups. He addressed efforts to train and inform local communities on the identification of natural resources in their lands. Noting conservation efforts involving external solutions have failed, he stressed that "now we have to go back to the roots and have our conservation models and lands recognized."

Representing the territories of Kurarwe and Panguipulli in Chile, Atanasio Gabriel Huenun Hueitra, Koyagtun Koz Koz



Participants during the talks

Mapu Mapuche Association, addressed ways to strengthen dialogues to better identify and address challenges based on ancestral knowledge. He focused on work to promote territorial mapping, vindicating Indigenous rights over land. Gabriel highlighted youth and women's participation and emphasized Indigenous Peoples' successful conservation efforts over centuries.

Alifireti Tawake, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Locally Managed Marine Areas International Network, discussed the development of spatial planning on marine biodiversity. Stressing that for people in the Pacific "the Ocean is part of us and within us," he described mapping efforts as part of a broader management plan, helping communities to integrate their knowledge and relationships into the map, including required safeguards to protect secret knowledge. He emphasized that next steps include a registry of locally managed marine areas, and a national registry recognized by governments, to ensure FPIC and safeguards to protect traditional and local knowledge are in place.

Moderator Sánchez Flores highlighted the importance of traditional knowledge, including for achieving GBF Targets, particularly Targets 1 (plan and manage all areas to reduce biodiversity loss), 3 (conserve 30% of land, waters, and seas), 9 (manage wild species sustainably to benefit people), and 13



Claudia Valeria Sánchez Flores, Indigenous Women's Network on Biodiversity in Latin America and the Caribbean

(increase the sharing of benefits from genetic resources, digital sequence information, and traditional knowledge).

PODONG Indigenous Peoples Initiative: Lessons and the Path Forward: This session, moderated by Anita Tzec on Friday, 10 October, focused on the PODONG Indigenous Peoples Initiative, which supports Indigenous leadership in conservation and climate action, ensuring participation and access to finance at scale.

Moderator Tzec provided an overview of the creation of the PODONG Initiative, the selection of its name, meaning “basket” in the Marma language of Bangladesh, and the agreement with Global Affairs Canada that supported the first cycle of the initiative.

Kerry Max highlighted the PODONG Initiative as a visionary and practical approach, expressing Canada’s commitment to support similar projects, particularly in regions rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage. He stressed that the initiative is more than a model; it represents a movement and call to action for reimagining practices to elevate Indigenous rights and transform global commitments into meaningful local outcomes.

Erica McCreedy highlighted that the PODONG Initiative was meaningfully co-developed and co-designed with Indigenous Peoples. She stressed that having Anita Tzec as an Indigenous leader within IUCN was a key component in this successful effort.

Paine Mako reported that the initiative has helped build personal relationships, made interactions and implementation easier, and strengthened funding partners’ assistance. She said the PODONG Initiative supports UCRT’s Indigenous-led work securing collective land titles and titles for vulnerable women, through building awareness of legal opportunities for protecting lands and assisting with inter-community conflict resolution.

Tunga Rai, Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) Climate Change Partnership Program, said the PODONG Initiative supports NEFIN’s work to rebalance human beings with nature. He explained that this work includes: transferring songs and festivities, as the root of traditional knowledge; training the younger generation in traditional values and culture; and fostering the use of a traditional calendar for harvesting mountain bamboo at different times of year for different purposes, to prevent people from thinking of it as a commodity and harvesting it all at once.

Krizzley Ordoñez García, Mayan youth leader, expressed appreciation to PODONG for: opportunities to participate



Anita Tzec, Maya Yucatec leader from Belize and Senior Programme Manager on Indigenous Peoples and Conservation, IUCN

in gatherings as an Indigenous person, particularly as an Indigenous woman; lessons learned from Indigenous leaders; and opportunities for sharing what she learned with other young people.

Regarding messages for the donor community, panelists recommended:

- sharing why PODONG matters across the philanthropic sector and making connections;
- focusing on land rights;
- building relationships to “revitalize the Earth;” and
- visiting Indigenous territories themselves to witness how magical they are.

Moderator Tzec closed the session, noting the work of PODONG is growing and more funds are being sought to support it. She presented a PODONG basket to Kerry Max to acknowledge Canada’s contribution.

Announcements and Reports and Closing of the Summit

This session took place on Friday, 10 October, and was moderated by Claudia Valeria Sánchez Flores. It highlighted new reports and announcements from Indigenous-led initiatives in biodiversity, climate action, and rights-based governance.

Vivian Figueroa highlighted:

- the [report of the international workshop on ITTs and biodiversity conservation](#), which took place from 2-5 September 2025 in Panama, underscoring the need to prioritize the recognition of ITTs that conserve biodiversity;
- the [Guidelines on ITTs in the context of biodiversity conservation, sustainable use, and restoration](#), which provide a comprehensive framework for recognizing and supporting the vital role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in biodiversity conservation, sustainable use, and ecosystem restoration within their ITTs; and
- a briefing on the journey of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the context of negotiating the CBD and its Protocols.

Vivian Silole provided an overview of the outputs of the IMPACT ICI in Kenya, which seeks to change the narrative around conservation through rights-based approaches, enabling Indigenous communities to attain recognition for their contribution to biodiversity. She highlighted the production of 44 biocultural maps, 11 biocultural calendars, a video documentary, and a



Krizzley Ordoñez García, Mayan youth leader



Vivian Silole, Project Manager, IMPACT Kenya ICI

photo essay. She further drew attention to Indigenous technical knowledge-based research, the organization of two annual inclusive conservation forums, the co-development of a manifesto for inclusive conservation, and the co-designing of a course in partnership with the University of Nairobi.

The first in-person IUCN World Summit for Indigenous Peoples and Nature concluded at 8.05 pm, with an Indigenous fashion show and an interactive “walk with nature and our ancestors” around the exhibition hall.

Upcoming Meetings

CBD SBSTTA 27: The 27th meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice will address matters of relevance to the implementation of the CBD and the GBF. **dates:** 20-24 October 2025 **location:** Panama City, Panama **www:** www.cbd.int/conferences/panama-2025

CBD SB8(j) 1: Held back-to-back with SBSTTA 27, the first meeting of the CBD’s Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) will address matters related to Indigenous Peoples and local communities. **dates:** 27-30 October 2025 **location:** Panama City, Panama **www:** www.cbd.int/conferences/panama-2025

12th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development: This meeting will bring together government representatives, UN entities, and other stakeholders to discuss current challenges to realizing the right to development. **dates:** 27-29 October 2025 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** www.ohchr.org/en/events/sessions/2025/twelfth-session-expert-mechanism-right-development

2025 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 30): This event will include COP 30, the 20th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 20), and the seventh meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 7). **dates:** 10-21 November 2025 **location:** Belém, Brazil **www:** unfccc.int/cop30

ITPGRFA GB 11: The 11th meeting of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) is expected to conclude revising the Treaty’s Multilateral System of Access and Benefit Sharing and

address, among others, farmers’ rights. **dates:** 24-29 November 2025 **location:** Lima, Peru **www:** www.fao.org/plant-treaty

CITES COP 20: The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) COP convenes every two to three years to review implementation of the Convention, review progress in conserving species included in the Convention’s Appendices, and consider proposals to amend the lists of species in Appendices I and II. **dates:** 24 November - 5 December 2025 **location:** Samarkand, Uzbekistan **www:** cites.org/eng/cop/20

UNCCD CRIC 23: The Committee to Review Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) will convene to review implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification’s (UNCCD) Strategic Framework, reporting, and other issues. **dates:** 1-5 December 2025 **location:** Panama City, Panama **www:** www.unccd.int/cric23

UNEA-7: The seventh meeting of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) will set the global environmental agenda, provide overarching policy guidance, and define policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges. **dates:** 8-12 December 2025 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** unep.org/environmentassembly/unea7

For additional upcoming events, see: sdg.iisd.org/events/

Glossary

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
FPIC	Free, prior, and informed consent
GBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
ICI	Inclusive Conservation Initiative
IIN	Indigenous Information Network
IIFB	International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity
IPCA	Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area
IPO	Indigenous Peoples’ Organization
ITTs	Indigenous and traditional territories
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NAILSMA	North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance, Ltd.
SB8j	Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j)
TNFD	Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change