

# SUMMARIES



FORESTS &  
COMMUNITIES  
INITIATIVE

INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION:

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

AT THE FOREFRONT OF  
FOREST PROTECTION

21  23 NOV 2023, MONACO

[www.forestsandcommunitiesinitiative.org](http://www.forestsandcommunitiesinitiative.org)











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## About the Forests and Communities Initiative

**The Forests and Communities Initiative's mission is to support conservation of forest ecosystems through the action of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPs & LCs) and through the development of a supporting network of multidisciplinary actors.**

Forests are home to most of the world's known biodiversity and to the inestimable cultural and spiritual wealth of highly diverse Indigenous Peoples who are often forests' best guardians thanks to their ancestral mastery of environmental stewardship.

The green heart and lungs of our planet, forests capture CO<sub>2</sub>, regulate the climate and are key to fighting desertification and soil erosion, yet their destruction has accelerated exponentially in recent years and on all continents. FCI was created in 2022 to address this crisis through a holistic approach incorporating environmental law and local economic, political and social

contexts. Its four founding partners are the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL), the International Ranger Federation, and the Global Forest Coalition. The International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity has since joined FCI as its fifth partner. FCI's current geographic focus is Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, South and South East Asia, and the Pacific islands.



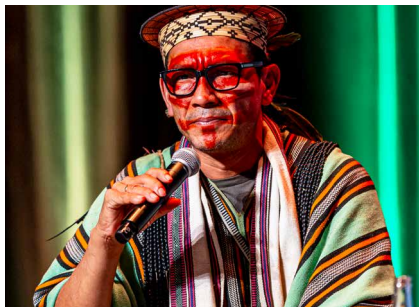




### *Nemonte Nenquimo Waonani*

Ecuador

"Mother Earth is not waiting for us to save her, she's just waiting for us to respect her. Very often those who speak about human rights and climate change are presidents and politicians. Decision-making does not include us indigenous women, and does not respect indigenous knowledge. We must be part of this discussion."



### *Benki Piyako Ashaninka*

Brazil

"People are not thinking about the future. They want to drink, eat, spend money right away. If we don't change our ways of doing things, the bill to pay will be much higher. But if we protect forests and animals and rivers, we will be wealthier than by burning forests; it will pay off in a different way, beneficial to all."



### *Tumursukh Jal*

Mongolia

"The planet is weeping. It is burning and dying because of illegal human activity. Do we want money or do we want to be able to breathe? We have to choose."



### *Mundiya Kepanga*

Papua New Guinea

"Please don't think that there are only five guardians of the forest, people with feathers on their heads from the end of the world. Each one of us has a responsibility. Whether at home or in their community, everyone is a guardian of the forest. If everyone acts that way, then we will be able to continue living on this planet."



### *Tiwyla Edqi Masuzumi*

Canada

"Native people are best suited to protect the land because the knowledge has been passed on by generations of our ancestors. They've always taught us to keep fighting for Mother Earth. If we don't continue that practice, they will have done all that work for nothing."



### *Hilarion Kassa Moussavi 'Mambongo'*

Gabon

"We have to reforest, and to teach children how to reforest by consulting the sages who are still able to hand down knowledge. This knowledge is not taken into account in the halls of power."



# Executive Summary

The inaugural FCI conference was held in Monaco from 21-23 November, 2023 on the theme «**Inclusive Conservation: Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities at the Forefront of Forest Protection**». With over 100 people attending, including many representatives of Indigenous and local communities from around the world, the conference aimed to identify needs, share lessons learned, develop recommendations, and build a community of practice.

The three panels covered effective forest conservation by IPs & LCs using rights-based and gender-just approaches; environmental law for forest conservation; and lastly, reconnecting conservation funding and governance with IPs & LCs. Panels were interspersed with Fireside Chats with featured speakers. Small-group workshops on the second day were an opportunity for practical discussions giving all attendees the chance to dive more deeply and interactively into the three topics and to identify ways to improve collaboration.



## Panel 1 Effective Forest Conservation: Rights-Based and Gender-Just Approaches

- ▣ IPs & LCs are key to implementation on the ground, and own many of the world's best conserved areas. We must listen to and learn from them, respecting their strong spiritual connection with nature and the fact it is their home.
- ▣ Recognise IPs & LCs' traditional knowledge and methodologies and promote their integration in decision-making while recognising IPs & LCs as landowners and rightsholders.
- ▣ Cease top-down approaches and perverse incentives.
- ▣ Build bridges between modern technology and traditional knowledge. Tools should be IP/LC-owned and used based on their values and needs.
- ▣ Better include the voices of Indigenous and local women and promote the effective practices they have been implementing over millennia.
- ▣ Spaces like FCI are key to building and promoting IP/LC-centred collaborative action, alliances and partnerships.



## Panel 2 Environmental Law in Forest Conservation

- ▣ The law plays a crucial role in enabling robust, effective and inclusive governance structures.
- ▣ Environmental law must recognise the integrity of ecosystems, while including those who live in and from the forest, and must foster development that is sustainable for them.
- ▣ We must look beyond environmental law to address global supply chains and other external activities driving deforestation, such as agriculture or extractive industries, which come under other types of law.
- ▣ We must ensure synergies and consistency within legal systems to avoid forest and environmental protection laws being undermined by other laws.
- ▣ Trade, investment and human rights laws must be closely scrutinised to ensure they protect Indigenous Peoples' rights like participation, information, and justice.
- ▣ National legislation needs to better align with agreed international goals and targets
- ▣ Laws are worth nothing if they are not effectively implemented and enforced.



## Panel 3 Reconnecting Funding and Governance to IPs & LCs for Forest Conservation

- ▣ Inclusive partnership with IPs & LCs is the most powerful tool to drive positive change for forest and biodiversity conservation.
- ▣ Recent progress in recognition of IPs & LCs should be encouraged and supported, including facilitating Indigenous Peoples' participation in biodiversity discussions.
- ▣ In conservation funding, Indigenous Peoples and local communities must be seen as partners, not recipients.
- ▣ Donors must work with IPs & LCs to develop and fund programs prioritising their rights and needs rather than donors' wishes.
- ▣ Donors could deliver resources to IPs & LCs projects more quickly, and simplify complex reporting requirements to allow IPs & LCs more flexibility and creativity.
- ▣ Rangers should be recognised as essential planetary health workers, emphasising collaboration with local communities for effective conservation management.
- ▣ Financial models need to be transformed and to shift towards nature-positive approaches, redirecting funds and reducing negative subsidies.
- ▣ Sustainable economic solutions like tourism and agroforestry need to be developed, with IPs & LCs' full participation and consent.





## Welcome Address

### HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco

“

“It is no coincidence that today 91% of the land owned by Indigenous Peoples and local communities have good or fair ecological status, when elsewhere it is so misused. This is the result of hundreds and thousands of years of intimacy with nature. This is the result of an approach that is more respectful of the overall balance of ecosystems. And it is, I believe, also the result of greater modesty and greater respect in regard to the wealth provided by our environment. Today, since we need to change our methods and approach, it is essential to do so with these peoples and these communities from whom we have so much to learn.”



Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear friends,

**I would like to welcome you all to Monaco for the first Conference organised by our Forests and Communities Initiative.**

First and foremost, I would like to thank those who have made this Conference possible, in conjunction with my Foundation's teams: the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law, the International Rangers Federation, the Global Forest Coalition, and the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity. And I would like to extend special thanks to the representatives of the Indigenous Peoples and local communities from Amazonia, the Congo Basin and Southeast Asia for doing us the honour of joining us here today.

On behalf of all the participants and organisers, I would like to express our appreciation and support to them. And I would also like to tell them, more broadly, how much we need them. How much the Planet needs them.

I have taken part in the majority of international discussions focused on the environment for over thirty years now. I have been involved, with my Government and my Foundation, in international negotiations devoted to the climate and biodiversity for close to twenty years. For years, I have intensified our efforts to this effect with private players, scientists, and NGOs.

Yet I have to admit it now: all these actions have not been enough. Not only have they not been enough, but the situation, far from improving, is getting worse as each year passes.

Climate records, IPBES studies, and even our own perceptions bear witness to this. The forests, the reason we are all here today, have been particularly hard hit. Their surface area has declined continuously and dramatically over the last few years. Of course, and thankfully, from time to time we have seen progress, achievements, as was the case in Montreal in 2022, at the Convention on Biological Diversity. However, even the global biodiversity framework we adopted will not suffice – we know this – given the seriousness of the situation. Despite our best efforts – sadly too rare and often too difficult to achieve – the fact is that our actions and our tools are insufficient to avert disasters for which we are responsible. We have to acknowledge this.

And we also have to acknowledge that most of the time the local communities and Indigenous Peoples had no part in these strategies, the shortcomings of which we are now aware. Not only were they not involved. Not only were they seldom the beneficiaries. Not only were these strategies often based solely on the reality of temperate forests and western society. But more importantly, we disregarded their knowledge, their skills, and their capacity for action.

It is no coincidence that today 91% of the land owned by Indigenous Peoples and local communities have a good or fair ecological status, when elsewhere it is so misused.

This is the result of hundreds and thousands of years of intimacy with nature. This is the result of an approach that is more respectful of the overall balance of the ecosystems. And it is, I believe, also the result of greater modesty and greater respect in regard to the wealth provided by our environment.

Today, since we need to change our methods and our approach, it is essential to do so with these peoples and these communities from whom we have so much to learn. It is essential to do so with you.

This is the very purpose of this Conference: to set a movement in motion which I believe is essential and, what's more, highly promising. To achieve this, we will be exploring several key aspects of forest management by local communities and Indigenous Peoples today: practices, community rights, funding, and governance.

We will address these different aspects holistically, incorporating as far as possible the diversity of the issues at stake, including ecological challenges and the players concerned. We will also address them based on sound scientific expertise – and I would like to thank the scientists who have also agreed to join us today. And we will do so based on a multidisciplinary approach, so that we have as complete a picture as possible.

More importantly, we will do so while endeavouring to detach ourselves from what is too often a reflex, and about which we now need to be mindful: believing that by doing better or more – something we have always done – we will be able to change things.

The period and the current situation call for more radical and bolder solutions. Some will work, as they work for you. Some may not be replicable in other latitudes. But it would be reprehensible not to look at them all.

We need to question our own convictions, drawing on nature, and remembering the words of the great Victor Hugo in his Memoirs: "How sad to think that nature speaks, and mankind doesn't listen."

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear friends,

If we are to listen to nature with more modesty, we are to learn to listen to each other better too, fellow human-beings from other cultures, other civilisations, and other continents.

At a time when our world is filled with so much hatred and lack of understanding, I believe that this message may resonate far beyond the forests for which we are here today.

Thank you.







## Evening Screening

The conference kicked off with a screening of *"Brazil, Replanting the Amazon"*, from the *"Our Forests"* documentary series, co-produced by ARTE France and Lato Sensus. The series explores the challenges of the world's primary forests through the eyes of five Indigenous leaders: Benki Piyako (Brazil), Twyla Edgi Masuzumi (Canada), Hilarion Kassa Moussavou (Gabon), Tumursukh Jal (Mongolia) and Mundiya Kepanga (Papua-New Guinea). The five leaders, gathered together for the first time, participated in a round table discussion after the screening.

Producer **Muriel Barra** emphasises that the series aims to impact political, economic and governance actors as well as audiences. Being entrusted with such a powerful message from these Indigenous leaders gives us a responsibility to carry it far beyond television, and to make their conscience and combat our own, she says.

**Luc Marescot**, who directed the Brazil episode, notes that the series follows on the 2017 film *"Brothers of the Trees"*, made to expose the ravages of deforestation in Papua New Guinea. The resulting negative publicity led to the repeal of laws favouring illegal logging by Chinese and Malaysian companies. This positive impact inspired the filmmakers to do the same for other forests.

**Chief Benki Piyako** of the Ashaninka People of Brazil is the focus of the preview screening. His Yorenka Tasorentsi Institute integrates traditional Indigenous knowledge and modern technology to address ecological, cultural and social challenges and regenerate the Amazon. His community has planted over two million trees in the past ten years and aims to plant 10 million more over the next decade.





Massive heat and drought due to recent deforestation have dried up hundreds of rivers in the Amazon, Benki reports. Thousands of animals and fish have died and hundreds of communities have no drinking water. He calls for all leaders to recognise their responsibility as guardians of the forest. Today's ecological crisis will be even worse if we don't have water to grow plants and if we poison the water we have. Planting forests, cleaning up our own mess and taking care of water is a first step, he says. This is what he teaches as he travels around Europe planting trees: let us plant trees and may their seeds grow in each of our hearts. "We Indigenous Peoples are doing our part."

**Twyla Edgi Masuzumi** of the K'asho Got'ine Dene people from Canada's Northwest Territories works alongside elders to defend Indigenous rights and preserve Dene culture and the boreal forest. She features in the Canada episode about ancestral knowledge and the environmental consequences of Exxon-owned Imperial Oil's activities in her region. For Indigenous people it is very important to practice what their elders taught about protecting the land, water, and animals, she begins. Her community lies downstream from Imperial Oil's operations, which have had a devastating impact.

"Having ruined our land, they're now almost out of oil, so they're trying to leave all their mess behind. Community leaders are fighting to get them to repair the damage." She recalls the traumatic history of Canada's forced removal of 150,000 Indigenous children from their families from the late 19th century until 1996. They tried to beat the Dene out of the child and take their culture away, something unimaginable for her as a mother of four young children. She runs programs connecting elders with youth to revive traditional cultural practices and restore their identity and bond with the land. "The elders always taught us to fight for Mother Earth. Native people are best suited to protect the land because of this ancestral knowledge passed down over generations. If we don't continue that practice, they will have done all that work for nothing," she says.

The next speaker is **Hilarion Kassa Moussavu (Mambongo)** of Gabon, from the episode "The Forest That Heals". Being here and meeting the other guardians of the forest is a dream come true, and the first time the shaman, healer and traditional chief has left his country. He has been protecting the forest since childhood, following the example of his four grandparents. Despite grassroots efforts, deforestation and poaching are accelerating in Gabon. "We can only diminish illegal forest exploitation, not stop it," he warns. For 18 years now he has been bringing youth back to their roots, teaching them the importance of the forest through partner organisation Ebando Nature and Culture. If young people don't take hold of our customs, they will be lost, he says. We must teach children how to reforest, consulting the sages who are still alive and handing down this knowledge ignored in the halls of power.





The forest has laws and hierarchies, with emblematic trees as its kings, Mambongo affirms. One is the iboga, Gabon's tree of knowledge used in initiation and healing ceremonies. Supported by NGO Blessings of the Forest, he is currently developing the Forest School Mussinda Mongho, to train young people in traditional herbal medicine. No one can have solutions all alone. We unite hand-in-hand, our wise elders and people of all ages everywhere, from the very youngest to the very oldest, he says.



**Tumursukh Jal** from the episode "Valley of the Bears" is Director and head ranger of the Ulaan Taiga National Park in northern Mongolia's boreal forest, which has the world's highest density of rivers and natural springs. This unique environment has suffered a rapid, drastic collapse in biodiversity, due mainly to illegal hunting and mining. Tumursukh, a former hunter himself, enforces environmental protection and is turning local hunters into forest guardians. However, they lack resources, with just 30 rangers to protect 1.2 million hectares. The planet is burning and dying because of illegal human activity, climate change, and drought, when the tiniest spark

can provoke a massive wildfire, whether in Siberia or Australia. "Do we want money, or to breathe? We have to choose," he says. His rangers work day and night to prevent fires and preserve nature. The film shows Tumursukh saving orphan bear cubs whose parents were killed fleeing the wildfires in Siberia. He feels deeply connected to wild animals, defending them with all his strength. His combat is very difficult, but if he doesn't fight, who will? Indigenous Peoples everywhere eat what nature provides. Tumursukh grew up in poverty, the oldest of 11 children. His father hunted only to feed his family, but after Mongolia's transition to a market economy, people started to hunt to make money. As the son of a traditional hunting people, he finds this shameful. The poachers made his job very difficult, saying, "You were raised hunting, so why are you against us now?" He replied, "My parents had to hunt to feed us, but you have 1,000 head of cattle. You're only hunting for money. I call that murder," he recalls. It was not easy, but he was able to transform hunters into good rangers, because they know every corner of the province. It remains dangerous work, and the rangers face risks every day, but when someone approaches with an evil intention, he just meets them with a big smile, he says.







**Mundiya Kepanga** is a customary chief and environmental activist from the Huli tribe of Papua New Guinea. Recalling the significant shift in his country's forest policy after the "Brother of the Trees" film exposed its devastating deforestation, he affirms politicians play a key role. If they do the right thing, they're the ones who can make the situation change. Papua New Guinea's situation is very different from the Amazon. Papuan landowners themselves created the laws allowing deforestation, and sell their trees because they have no money. They must be given economic alternatives, like the agroforestry example shown in the episode of "Our Forests" where landowners plant shade trees to grow vanilla. Some communities earn money by charging scientists to come study their unique, protected forest. And in the mountain province of Enga, landowners plant coffee in damaged areas, earning livelihoods without cutting down more trees. Development of secondary forests is another solution. The government wants to use deforested areas to plant trees for harvest, continually replacing them with new trees. This industrial forestry will allow Papuan Indigenous Peoples to protect the primary forest, which is absolutely essential,

Mundiya says. Papua New Guinea still has many problems, especially corruption. It's an endless struggle, but we must continue to fight. Protecting our forests requires awareness from our local politicians, and international assistance: many of these projects receive aid from the international community, the European Union, and others.

"Please don't think there are only five forest guardians here on stage with feathers on their heads from the end of the world," he says. "Each one of us has a responsibility. Whether it's at home in your own garden or in your community, if everyone acts as a guardian of nature, then we will be able to continue living on this planet."





# SEBASTIÃO SALGADO

Photographer,  
Studio Salgado

Sebastião Salgado came to photography after a career as an economist in Africa. His photographs of the Indigenous Peoples and remaining pristine forests of Amazonia became a book and exhibition shown all over the world, raising awareness of deforestation and the Brazilian Indigenous environmental movement.

Destruction of primary forests releases disastrous amounts of carbon. Because of deforestation, the eight worst cities in Brazil for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are within the Amazon, not big cities like Rio or Sao Paulo, Mr Salgado notes. Planting trees is critical to mitigating climate change. The Salgado family's Instituto Terra has planted about 3 million trees in Brazil. Through larger projects like Indigenous leader Benki Piyako's, we can rehabilitate biodiversity, guarantee carbon capture and restore water systems, he says. Recent years have seen historic droughts in Europe. Meanwhile, biodiversity is fast disappearing – Germany has lost 70% in the last 40 years, for instance. If we fail to plant trees, we will live in a desert. The plants we depend on for food will not be pollinated, and natural resistance to disease will be lost, Mr Salgado warns.

Regarding the possibility of global environmental governance, he says the United Nations can have a position but it cannot dictate laws. We must have environmentally engaged national governments. The new Brazilian government is better than the last, which was a disaster, but that could change again in four years. This is the problem with democratic politics; the country that has planted the most trees is not a democracy, it's China, he notes. Instituto Terra no longer works with the Brazilian government because of its failure to honour financial commitments. The German government backed a successful project to plant 4,200 small forests in Brazil to rehabilitate water resources, but it took 13 years to get approval. Governments are very slow and



their decisions risk being changed by successors. The only way to achieve the speed necessary for this planetary emergency is to work with the private sector: in just three months, Zurich Insurance Group approved and financed Instituto Terra's planting of 1 million trees, Mr Salgado reports.

**Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo**

comments from the audience that the UN Strategic Plan on Forests constitutes one global governance tool. Many laws and policies exist; the real challenge is enforcement, and correcting the mistakes of the past to including the main stakeholders, she says.

Mr Salgado agrees. Native forest people in Brazil are integral to forest conservation — they are not the problem. Local economic actors must also be involved: the vast majority of forests needing rehabilitation are in the hands of farmers, yet none are represented here today. We have money for carbon credits, but it's largely huge companies that get the money. If we don't integrate farmers and landowners into all these discussions and pay them enough money to plant, no one will be planting the trees we need to absorb carbon.





# BENKI PIYAKO ASHANINKA

President,  
Yorenka Tasorentsi  
Institute

Benki Piyako is an Indigenous spiritual and political leader from the Ashaninka tribe of Brazil. He has championed Indigenous rights for decades, particularly those relating to land, culture, and traditional knowledge, working with political and environmental activists and organisations from all over the world.

Planting over 2,5 million trees since 2007, he works to restore degraded lands, watersheds, forests, and threatened animal and plant species while engaging in education and community-building throughout the Amazon. His Yorenka Tasorentsi Institute also works with other Indigenous Peoples in Peru and Brazil to revitalise their ancestral knowledge and culture.

"Laws can be important, but what law will require us to live in harmony with forests? None. Our law is that of nature. We have a responsibility towards her as the source of our life, our food, and our air, as our elders taught," Mr Piyako says. Everything is intrinsically linked. Each component destroyed has an impact on everything and everyone else.

Mr Piyako's people have lived for millennia in the forest without exterminating it, respecting nature's balance and spirit. Elsewhere we see droughts, forests cleared, fish exterminated and water poisoned. "If we don't learn from these mistakes, we'll have even worse problems," he warns. Consumers and economists should understand that oil and gold extraction destroys forests and animals, which are our real capital. Trees are being cut down and species exterminated to make way for mining. "These people tell us we're poor, but they're the ones who are poor, and they're destroying our wealth," he declares.

For millennia we've taken care of the forest, but we've never been paid for it, while those who killed the animals and plants are being paid to replant.



Why shouldn't we be paid? We have know-how and a sense of responsibility for preserving our forest. We have a different outlook on life, one of love and commitment as stewards, not owners of forests. Indigenous Peoples and local communities must be part of a new dialogue, Mr Piyako affirms. If we protect forests and animals and rivers, we will be wealthier than by burning forests.

It will pay off in a different way, with many fruit and wood varieties, and natural medicines that are not processed, not genetically modified, and can be beneficial to all. We should look at forests as a green pharmacy, he suggests.

We want everyone to benefit, and the law is important for this, but if we fail to change our way of doing things, the bill will be much higher. We have to plant trees, protect forests, and take care of our planet right now. People aren't thinking about the future. They want to eat, drink, and spend money today. I have another outlook, because my mother and father taught us the importance of the forest and said, eat well, but plant back, and pass these teachings on to your children. This is my responsibility. Humanity has triggered this imbalance. Who can change this? If each of us is responsible, we can, Benki Piyako concludes.







## SESSION 1

# Effective Forest Conservation by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: Rights-Based and Gender-Just Approaches



- **Lucy Mulenkei** Co-Chair, International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (**moderator**)
- **Lakpa Nuri Sherpa**, Co-Chair and Asia Coordinator, International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity
- **Anindya Prima Hadi**, Programme Manager, Kaleka
- **Valentina Figuera Martínez**, Coordinator of Gender Justice Campaign, Global Forest Coalition
- **María Alvarez Malvido**, Program Associate, Digital Democracy



Participants first briefly introduced their work, beginning with **Lakpa Nuri Sherpa** from the Sherpa Indigenous community of Nepal, who heads the environment programme of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) and is co-chair of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity.



Asia has one of the highest numbers of Indigenous Peoples in the world. Like those everywhere in the world, they share a strong spiritual and cultural connection to the land and its resources. Mr Nuri Sherpa points to a large gap between the strong Indigenous rights language of COP15, and what is happening on the ground, whether in Amazonia, Papua New Guinea or Asia. There's a very strong need to strengthen the movement of Indigenous Peoples, he suggests.

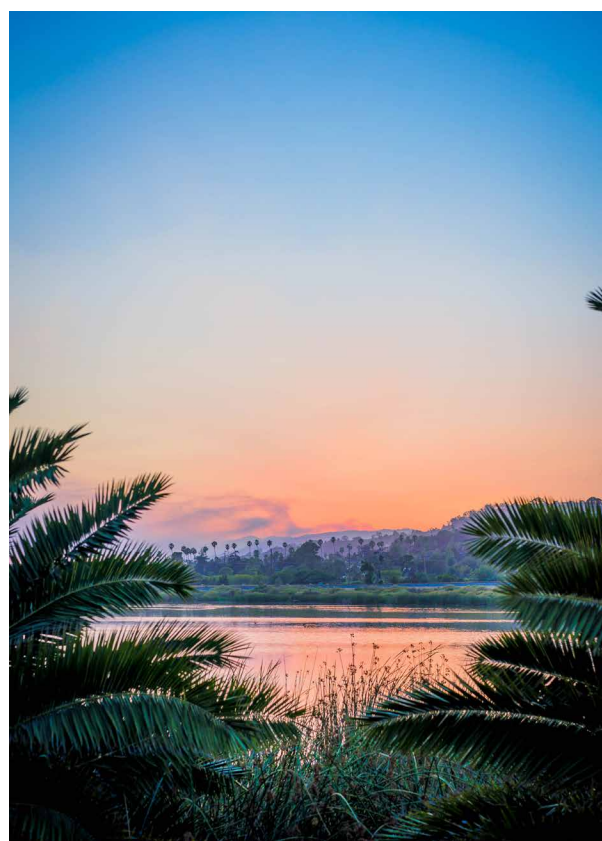
AIPP this year launched a regional learning hub where Asian Indigenous Peoples come together and reflect on their struggles and lessons learned. One need is for more frequent monitoring than that done by the CBD and the climate platform, where progress is reviewed only every four or five years. Indigenous Peoples need to reflect annually and participate in national processes to ensure their rights and goals decided on the international level are actually reflected on the ground, he affirms.

**Anindya Prima Hadi** from Indonesian non-profit Kaleka manages five conservation and sustainability projects, one of them supported by the Forests and Communities Initiative. The Seruyan district in central Borneo is an important biodiversity hotspot, home to endangered species like the orangutan and sun bear and to the ancient, culturally rich Dayak people. The tribe is very dependent on the forest, but agricultural development has eroded biodiversity and their community, she reports. Despite massive

expropriation for oil palm plantation, Seruyan has managed to preserve 47% of its forest, and was made a pilot district for testing the jurisdictional approach of the Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), as oil palm contributes most of the district's revenue. This voluntary certification scheme aims to ensure commodities are produced sustainably at jurisdictional scale. Supply-chain visibility tools can easily map activities affecting biodiversity, species, habitats and ecosystems. But Kaleka's project aims to map Indigenous needs and cultural value on the landscape level. To be more inclusive, it links the top-down approach of large-scale assessment and mapping with bottom-up efforts like village-level participatory mapping. We believe this pioneering combination will assist in the transition to sustainable palm oil, and be applicable to other jurisdictions globally, Ms Prima Hadi says.

**Valentina Figuera Martinez** is Coordinator of the Global Forest Coalition's Gender Justice Campaign. GFC is an international alliance of Indigenous Peoples, organisations and local communities working to defend their rights and give them a voice at the international level. It has a special focus on the impacts on Indigenous, rural and traditional women, who are at the forefront of forest and biodiversity conservation.

GFC develops local, regional and global actions to defend and promote traditional practices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as a specific conservation tool. It identifies local communities' needs and raises awareness of the impacts of extractive industries and the different types of violence that affect their rights, especially with regard to women.







Digital Democracy Programme Associate **María Alvarez Malvido** collaborates with Indigenous communities to defend human and environmental rights using digital mapping and monitoring tools. Digital Democracy partners with Amazon earth defenders and Indigenous Peoples in Peru, Brazil and Ecuador, and also in Kenya, Canada, and Suriname, co-developing technology appropriate to their needs and capacities.

The NGO did not originally work with software development, but through years of accompanying Earth defenders, it identified a gap in monitoring and mapping tools, she recalls. Although GPS and other tools existed, none were conceived for the contexts of the people they were working with, so Digital Democracy created MAPEO, an offline-first, open-source technology that required a long process of identifying needs, coding and designing.

The resulting tool is very intuitive, translatable to many languages, and requires little technical capacity, working even with very old cell phones. Each community has re-shaped MAPEO to serve its needs and document impacts from threats like mining, oil, and poaching that many here face, Ms Malvido notes.

MAPEO supports communities' own mapping of their understanding of and relationship to their territories. One illustration is the Waorani victory against the Ecuadorian government, which was selling their land to oil companies.

The government's claim used maps showing the land as empty, but part of the very powerful Waorani strategy was to create their own maps proving this land was primary forest, teeming with life and knowledge that should be protected.

**Lakpa Nuri Sherpa** addresses the persistent problem of non-inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in international climate and biodiversity decision-making. From his experience working at the local, national and international level, the first thing that needs to change is how Indigenous Peoples are perceived: Are they victims? Project beneficiaries? Receivers of project funds, or rightsholders? Do they have a right to participate in decision-making? Do they have inherent rights to their lands, territories and resources? It is crucial that we Indigenous Peoples be seen as rightsholders both at the international, and most importantly, at the national level, he says.

AIPP continually monitors national action across Asia. Last year it published research on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to see how they translated into implementation of rights, and discovered that Indigenous Peoples, women and youth were invisible from a rightsholder perspective. That's the first thing that should change, Mr Nuri Sherpa suggests.

The second need is for a dedicated space to engage with Indigenous Peoples, which doesn't currently exist.



Policy-makers, governments and donors should create that framework to support Indigenous Peoples' participation, without which neither the Paris agreement targets, which are already lagging behind, nor those of the global biodiversity framework will ever be achieved. Government actors themselves recognise previous biodiversity targets failed because Indigenous rights were neglected in implementation.

The third issue is funding. Indigenous Peoples need to receive funds directly to carry out local actions, but for this to happen donors and governments need to understand how to work with them, and develop supportive mechanisms to facilitate access to funds, he notes. Funding also needs to offer Indigenous communities greater visibility over longer periods.

Another aspect is human rights. As has been said here, one problem in conservation is the top-down approach: projects are decided somewhere else, without informing Indigenous Peoples, and often the proposed solution becomes a problem for them. We must put Indigenous Peoples in the driving seat, Mr Nuri Sherpa says. AIPP works with conservation organisations to train staff such as park authorities regarding the rights of local Indigenous Peoples. Lastly, we need a whole-of-society approach. Some existing laws and policies run counter to the objectives of the Paris agreement and the global biodiversity framework.

Besides formulating new laws and policies updating NDCs, we need to identify the underlying problems driving ecosystem destruction, he concludes.

The discussion turned to gender inequalities. To reduce them, land rights must be defended, says the Global Forest Coalition's **Valentina Figuera Martinez**. Ongoing territorial conflicts are not being addressed properly in international fora, with Indigenous women in particular suffering extreme violence in land disputes. We need to advocate for and defend land rights in international and local policy-making spaces, she says.

Gender-disaggregated data are also needed to track and visualise gender gaps. Collecting data on what is affecting Indigenous, local, and rural women is key to achieving targets 22 and 23 of the Global Biodiversity Framework, which are fundamental to women's rights and their participation in national strategies.

Local and Indigenous women's inclusion in decision-making is not only about numbers, it's about effectiveness, enabling Indigenous women to express what is happening on the ground and take decisions at a high level. This is necessary to be able to plan, design and achieve concrete biodiversity and conservation outcomes.





Continuous capacity building is also important, because sometimes we feminist and gender-just defenders circulate in the same circles, Ms Figuera Martinez notes. We need more men and more people working in biodiversity and civil society spheres to understand what gender inequality means on the ground, and to continue learning and sharing.

**Anindya Prima Hadi** agrees that to achieve and scale up conservation, Indigenous people and local communities must be involved in decision-making at every stage, as they are the main actors of implementation on the ground. They should be in charge of spatial planning and designation of high conservation value areas for protection, for example. This is why her organisation combines top-down and bottom-up approaches to be more inclusive. We are hoping not only academics can use this, but that it will be effective and easy to use for Indigenous and local communities. If it works with them, it can be scaled up everywhere in the world, she says.



**María Alvarez Malvido** suggests reframing our mentality as non-Indigenous people seeking to include Indigenous people in actions we determine. Instead, we should ask ourselves how to understand and support the needs they themselves identify. This means a lot of listening and close accompaniment.

Technology and maps are not neutral. Historically, they have been used to colonise, dispossess and extract, she notes. Digital Democracy puts a lot of care into relationships and co-creation involving everyone in the community to develop maps and technology allowing them to use their ancestral knowledge to protect the land and the forest. MAPEO involves women in developing the technology and mapping process. Women hold critical knowledge about the land and the most efficient processes we are accompanying are those involving women, many of them led

by women, Ms Malvido says. Codesigning and thinking technology from a local perspective and really acknowledging needs is the best way we can collaborate.



Moderator **Lucy Mulenkei** of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity observes that one of the most interesting aspects in her organisation's community mapping work is older women's knowledge of resources, medicinal plants and other remarkable species.

**Lakpa Nuri Sherpa** cautions that even implementing global goals that have already been agreed presents a lot of challenges. In Asia, his organisation is engaged in massive awareness raising and capacity building, because to effectively contribute, Indigenous Peoples need to know their rights and which existing laws and policies support them and which are detrimental. AIPP has worked to make the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples accessible by producing training manuals, posters, animation, videos and comic books in different languages. It also trains trainers in Indigenous communities.

Communication goes both ways: raising awareness about Indigenous Peoples and local communities is a key responsibility for all of us if we are serious about supporting them, he says. This is why AIPP does a lot of photo stories about the leadership of Asian Indigenous women and youth. We need to think ahead. Climate change is driving migration, as loss, damage, development and aggressions force Indigenous Peoples out of their territories. We have to collectively think about how to strengthen young people's weakening links with their land, territories, and resources, he suggests.



**Anindya Prima Hadi** emphasises the importance of increasing IPs & LCs' awareness of their land as the first step to knowing exactly where to cultivate, and where to protect. That has to change from the ground up before you can take it to the top.

**Valentina Figuera Martinez** insists on the need to reduce the influence of corporations in UN talks. At the last COP, over 600 fossil fuel lobbyists influenced agendas, resolutions, and many decisions that directly affect the lives of forest defenders, especially women. We must continue advocating for taking big polluters out of decision-making processes and putting more owners of traditional knowledge into them.

In response to an audience question, **María Alvarez Malvido** acknowledges that data protection is a critical concern. Digital Democracy's MAPEO works offline because most Earth defenders they work with have limited Internet, but also because Internet connections send information to servers elsewhere, usually in the United States. Instead, MAPEO works as a decentralised peer-to-peer database that stays with local users.



People go out to document oil spills, or jaguar tracks, or whatever the community decides to monitor. When they return, the information in their phones synchronises and can be displayed on a map which remains on local equipment. The community determines its own security protocols and how maps will be used, she explains.

MAPEO is a free, downloadable, open-source generic app. Its categories correspond to many common territorial contexts like sacred places, important features, and impacts from threats like mining and poaching, but the app can be customised with additional categories and translated into many languages. Digital Democracy helps people to do this themselves, making MAPEO accessible and intuitive while providing data sovereignty, so that information stays within the community unless they decide to share it. The app can use a locally designed map to reflect a community's own representation of their territory. To Waorani partners, for example, rivers are not blue, but brown and muddy. This takes a lot of capacity on our end, but it is important for advocacy, legal defence, monitoring, and visualising impacts, Ms Malvido says.

In many places it's women who fetch the water in the river and witness how it changes. Those changes may not be visible to the government or someone else but are visceral for those who live off the land and take care of it, so these maps become very important, she notes. Now MAPEO users want to record video and audio and encrypt, so we're trying to balance accessibility with new requirements that grow with the intensity of the threats in these territories.

**Lucy Mullenkei** suggests that mapping can also be useful as inventory, to monitor trees cut or planted, for instance.

Regarding finance, **Valentina Figuera Martinez** adds that we must avoid perverse incentives and corporate lobbies' support for approaches that may be well-intentioned but do not defend Indigenous and local communities' interests. Financing must be built collaboratively and tracked effectively to avoid the greenwashing seen in recent years.

**Maria Alvarez Malvido** emphasises long-term local engagement with community partners to address funding needs and strategies, citing a meeting Digital Democracy organised in the Ecuadorian Amazon last May with its key partners to craft a five-year vision.



She agrees that the source of funding is a major concern. As an organisation that does software development, Digital Democracy attracts the tech world, which can have a negative impact on people defending their land from mining and other harmful technology.

**Anindya Prima Hadi** notes that while funding is essential, partnership also means collaborative action and exchange of information. She cautions against good guy-bad guy scenarios that blame the government or the private sector. We want to save the planet, conserve the forest, and defend land rights, but where we are working, the massive expansion of palm oil is unavoidable; it's the main contributor of revenue and livelihoods for the district, she explains.

The question is how to make it sustainable, balancing development with forest restoration and conservation, so her organisation is sitting down together with all stakeholders – the government, the private sector, Indigenous Peoples and local communities – to discuss how to achieve this through collaborative action.

**Lakpa Nuri Sherpa** sees progress in the attention given to Indigenous Peoples and their specific

agendas in recent years, at UN meetings for example. He attributes this to partnership among peoples from all over the world, supported by friendly governments and donor communities. The “Our Forests” documentary screened on the first evening of the conference is another example. Partnership is not optional but essential to advancing Indigenous rights and to implementing the global agenda at the local and national level. Mr Nuri Sherpa flags criteria for effective partnerships: first, they should be on equal terms, and not “You’re receiving my money, so you do it the way I want”, which has been the conventional approach, he notes. It should be the other way around: how can this partnership be useful for the priorities of Indigenous Peoples and be developed in a way that they want and that will work for them? Indigenous Peoples must be at the centre of decision-making and gain more direct access to financing, he says.

Lucy Mulenkei agrees with the need to change development narratives and find different ways to involve everyone. Indigenous and local communities’ allies should constantly question themselves and seek to learn from their partners; this dynamic panel has itself been a great learning opportunity.





# NEMONTE NENQUIMO WAORANI

**Co-Founder,  
Amazon Frontlines  
& Alianza Ceibo**

Amazon Frontlines and Alianza Ceibo co-founder Nemonte Nenquimo was raised in the traditional Waorani community of Nemonpare in the Ecuadorian Amazon. She co-founded Ceibo in 2015 to protect Indigenous life and territories from resource extraction in the Amazon rainforest, and in 2019 led her people to a historic legal victory against the Ecuadorian government. Setting a precedent for Indigenous rights, the ruling achieved protection of 200,000 hectares of primary Amazon rainforest illegally granted to oil companies.

Indigenous lands make up nearly 50% of the remaining standing Amazon forest. Indigenous people respect Mother Earth, and thank their ancestors for millennia of connection with nature. This inheritance is our greatest treasure, Ms Nenquimo says. We are the first line of defence against climate change, for the good of everyone on Earth and everyone yet to come. The Amazon is vital for the whole world. The forest gives us life. Your ancestors had this knowledge, but it has been lost. You work on computers to feed your children, while we live in the forest as a community, sharing food. Knowledge and a spiritual connection to nature have been lost in many places, and the world must restore this link. The peoples of Amazonia are under threat because they have wood, oil, and gold. Your oil is our grandparents' blood, she says. Capitalism requires resources, resources, and more resources, and this affects not only Indigenous Peoples; climate change impacts the whole world. Oil is supposed to take us out of poverty, but to us this is poverty, because it's destroying our rivers, our lands and our culture.

Indigenous people depend on the forest, living in spiritual harmony with nature; we hunt and fish to eat, not to sell. We don't want to live in a world of individualism. We want to continue living as a community, respecting what our ancestors did. Traditionally, it's Waorani women who are the leaders. Today the Amazon is being contaminated by a male-dominated civilisation that doesn't respect



women and commits violence against them. Women must continue to be respected, as Mother Earth must be respected to give us life, Nemonte Nenquimo urges. Leading this long fight as a young woman and mother has been very difficult, but her love for her children and respect for her powerful lineage keep her going. When I die, I will sow a lot of seeds everywhere, and knowing this gives me strength, she says. She works not just for her children's future, but for the whole world. Without healthy land, air, and water, we will all cease to exist.

Scientists, presidents and politicians talk a lot about climate change and human rights but they're not giving a voice to Indigenous women in the Amazon at the forefront of the fight against climate change, Nemonte Nenquimo observes. Decision-making doesn't include us, and Indigenous knowledge is not respected. If you leave us fighting in our corner, talking about climate change is a waste of time. Mother Earth isn't waiting for us to save her, she's just waiting for us to respect her. We must be part of this discussion if the world is to have a decent future.

She ends with an urgent request to all present to sign a petition to pressure Ecuador's government to respect the August 2023 referendum that voted to terminate oil drilling in the Yasuní National Park. Yasuní, one of the most biodiverse areas on the planet, is sacred Waorani territory and home to the last two Indigenous communities in Ecuador living in voluntary isolation. The referendum constituted a new precedent for environmental democracy and Indigenous rights, but is now under threat, as Ecuador's recently elected president is not respecting it, she reports.

We want this new campaign to go global, acknowledging that Ecuadorian Indigenous groups won against oil. "As our friend said, do you want to sell your trees or sell your children? Some people in difficulty are tempted to give in, but we have to protect our land, and we need your help," Nemonte Nenquimo says. The 2019 victory against the Ecuadorian state was achieved with the support of people all over the world. The resulting protection of the forest wasn't just for the Waorani, it was for the life of the whole planet.

She asks from the bottom of her heart, please sign this [Amazon Frontlines Petition!](#)



# PROFESSOR CARLOS NOBRE

**Co-chair, Science  
Panel for the Amazon  
(SPA)**



Co-Chair of the Amazon Science Group and Nobel-Prize winning co-author of the 2007 IPCC report, the climate scientist notes that he has never attended a meeting with so many different Indigenous representatives as today's FCI event. Indigenous Peoples have developed their own forest science for millennia, using more than 2,000 species in the Amazon alone. Preserving the forest is essential for them, whether from a cultural, philosophical, or health perspective. They have kept the Amazon standing for thousands of years, and want to preserve it with all its biodiversity.

Some 8 to 10 million Indigenous people from 1,200 ethnic groups were living in the Amazon when Europeans arrived around 1500, bringing bacteria and viruses with them that almost drove these peoples to extinction. About 400 different ethnic groups remain today. Europeans in South America ignored Indigenous knowledge despite achievements like the transformation of very poor soil into highly fertile «dark earth».

Indigenous Amazon women engaged in very sophisticated agriculture, developing 1,300 species of cocoa and more than 700 species of manioc and domesticating many medicinal plants. Indigenous people recognised women's scientific ability, while men still dominate our science spheres, he notes. Instead of learning from Amazon Indigenous people and Afro-descendent riverine communities who kept the forest alive, we imported a model that destroyed it. Better inclusion of IPs & LCs in conservation science is a big challenge.

The Amazon is very close to a tipping point that would cause the emission of more than 250 billion

tons of carbon dioxide and massive biodiversity loss, which also increases the risk of pandemics. The first solutions are nature-based: zero deforestation, zero degradation and zero wildfires, and very large-scale forest restoration. Mr Nobre calls for a shift to a social bioeconomy of healthy forest ecosystems like those

Indigenous people have maintained, with very low deforestation compared to other areas. He is developing the Amazon Institute of Technology, a bioeconomy innovation platform involving IPs & LCs that aims to launch before COP 30 in 2025 in Belém. Partners include six Indigenous scientists, four of them women who run local community agroforestry systems.

Mr Nobre agrees the carbon credit system in Brazil is dysfunctional and often predatory, and is not really benefitting Indigenous People. "We should value not only carbon but all forest ecosystem services, including climate stabilisation and temperature regulation," he suggests. The Amazon's capacity to recycle water to the tropical savanna south of the Amazon has huge importance for agriculture there — this ecosystem service alone is estimated to be worth \$1 billion per year.

Other services include the maintenance of biodiversity, which reduces the risk of epidemics and pandemics. Indigenous people have the most important role, and we must ensure on a global level that they benefit accordingly. How the biodiversity fund created at COP 15 will benefit Indigenous people and local communities is a huge question.

Replying to a question about the Nagoya Protocol on the equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources, Mr Nobre says that despite initial excitement in Brazil about how this framework could compensate Amazon Indigenous and local communities, they are not benefiting. Meanwhile, companies in China, the US and Europe are patenting thousands of products derived from Indigenous knowledge.









## SESSION 2

# The Use of Environmental Law in Forest Conservation

- **Christina Voigt**, Chair, Climate Change Specialist Group of the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL) (moderator)
- **Antonio Herman Benjamin**, Brazilian High Court Judge and President of the Global Judicial Institute on the Environment
- **Ramiro Batzín**, Co-Chair, International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity
- **Eeshan Chaturvedi**, Environmental Lawyer, Member, World Commission Environmental Law, IUCN
- **Txai Suruí**, Indigenous Activist from the Paiter Surui People, and Founder of Indigenous Youth Movement Rondônia
- **Ajay Kumar Jha**, Co-Chair, Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism and Regional Facilitator for UNEP



Moderator **Christina Voigt** of the IUCN's World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL) frames the panel as a critical, inclusive conversation about law's possibilities but also its limitations. To tackle climate change and biodiversity loss, we know we must conserve existing forests. The question is how, and how to address the drivers of deforestation, which are often external to local communities.



Law doesn't provide all the answers, but it is an important governance tool to make sure policies are sustainable and protect those at the front lines. Many legal tools exist, such as those establishing protected areas or national parks, and those recognising Indigenous and local communities' rights to their lands and culture. In many places today, laws even recognise the rights of nature, which would not have happened without Indigenous communities' input, she says.

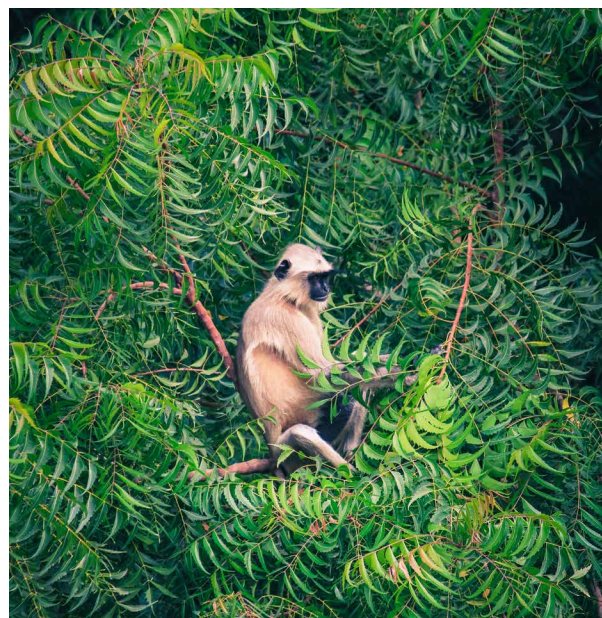
Beyond protecting existing forests, we must restore degraded lands. Legal tools are important to ensure the right trees are planted in the right places, and that they are not cut down when circumstances change. Laws need to incentivise landowners to do the right thing while prohibiting and correcting harmful practices. Offsetting emissions by paying people to protect the forest doesn't prevent emissions increasing elsewhere, so for forests to matter in a climate context, legislation is required to propel drastic emission reductions.

We must also legally protect the rights of forest guardians, many of whom are in the room here today. They must be included in policy and decision-making processes at all levels, not as stakeholders, but as rightsholders, Ms Voigt affirms. Legal tools are also needed to ensure access to information, which is key to meaningful participation in decision-making, and access to justice, so that rights violations can be taken to the courts.

WCEL is working on a Model Forest Act that can be tailored to different countries' needs and circumstances. It also engages with judges, as courts are often the last resort, she notes, setting the stage for the next panelist, Brazilian High Court Judge and global environmental law leader **Antonio Herman Benjamin**, who speaks via video message. The protection and regulation of forests predates environmental law by centuries, if not millennia, Justice Benjamin begins. Legal texts from ancient civilisations already deal directly and indirectly with forests and their protection, but environmental law as a field appears only in the late 1960s and 70s, and in Brazil, in the 1980s.

Today's forest legislation is not working well, for many reasons. In some countries such as India, forest legislation predates independence. In other countries, including Brazil, it is a mosaic of provisions weakened by others, such as tax and land-use laws. A deeper problem is massive noncompliance in many parts of the world, where forest legislation is not in harmony with protection of Indigenous Peoples. From satellite images of the Amazon, we see that some of the best protected forests are within Indigenous territories. We need to integrate protection of forests with recognition of their relevance for Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The Model Forest Act currently being drafted is a very important cooperative effort in environmental law. Countries will be able to use this text either to reform existing forest legislation, or to enact an entirely new, modern, all-encompassing forest legislation, he explains.

The other panelists briefly introduce their work. Environmental and energy lawyer and scholar **Eeshan Chaturvedi** is a member of the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law. His professional interests focus on the Indian subcontinent, and how the environmental legal framework interacts with forest rights and justice. He views law as an organic, dynamic construct reflecting society, and a key part of government systems.







**Txai Suruí** is an Indigenous environmental activist from the Paiter Suruí people of Brazil. She founded the Rondônia Indigenous Youth Movement, coordinates the Kanindé Ethno-Environmental Defence Association, and sits on the board of WWF Brazil. Laws often constitute one of many threats to Indigenous Peoples, she observes. In Brazil, conservative MPs are trying to deprive Indigenous Peoples of their rights, with absurd laws in the pipeline to evict them from their own protected territories, and to rob them. Many territories in Brazil do not appear in a land register, complicating Indigenous Peoples' fight to keep their land. We have to protect our territory because without natural parks or legal rights, zero-deforestation is not achievable. Global goals can only be achieved if our rights are protected, she affirms.

Lawyer and development policy analyst **Ajay Kumar Jha** has worked in human rights, development and sustainability for more than two decades. He works with Indigenous communities to support their claims under India's 2006 Forest Rights Act, the first formal legal recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights to habitat and livelihood in relation to forests. Since then, almost 2.2 million individual forest rights claims by Indigenous People have been approved, and some 100,000 for community forest rights. Mr Jha's non-profit organisation PAIRVI also conducts policy advocacy on forest, land, and food-related legislation.

"These nature, climate-change, and forest questions are too important to be left to the government alone, so we try to engage people on these sustainability issues", he says.

**Ramiro Batzín** from Guatemala's Indigenous Maya Kaqchikel people is Executive Director of holistic development and conservation organisation Sotz'il and Co-Chair of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB). He is also an advisor and vice-president of IUCN. Mr Batzín's work centres on legal protection of Indigenous territories. Forest and biodiversity protection are crucial, but Indigenous Peoples' quality of life must also be protected. We must recognise and safeguard traditional knowledge to protect the systems inherent to Indigenous Peoples, he urges. To that end, the IIFB is working on a national and international framework recognising Indigenous rights while addressing natural resource management.





Panelists then discuss the question of environmental laws' effectiveness in ensuring sustainable forest management and protecting the rights of IPs & LCs, and how to improve them. There is a void, which is why we're having this discussion, **Eeshan Chaturvedi** suggests.

Law is much bigger than just rules that affect or govern us, or define rights and duties. Many things have to come together for laws to be effective. Three key building blocks are access to information, public consultation, and access to justice, whether we're talking about forest, conservation, or contractual law, he says. Law is also decision-making and the rights of those affected on an everyday basis; Indigenous Peoples and local communities are often affected first and worst. One problem is that the law tends to lag behind societal disruptions, as the current example of artificial intelligence shows.

Conversely, another challenge is how best to go back and fix things that have been wrong for generations. Deforestation has been happening for centuries now in some places. People have been removed from land and deprived of their rights, and whether to call them stakeholders or rightsholders is an ongoing discussion.

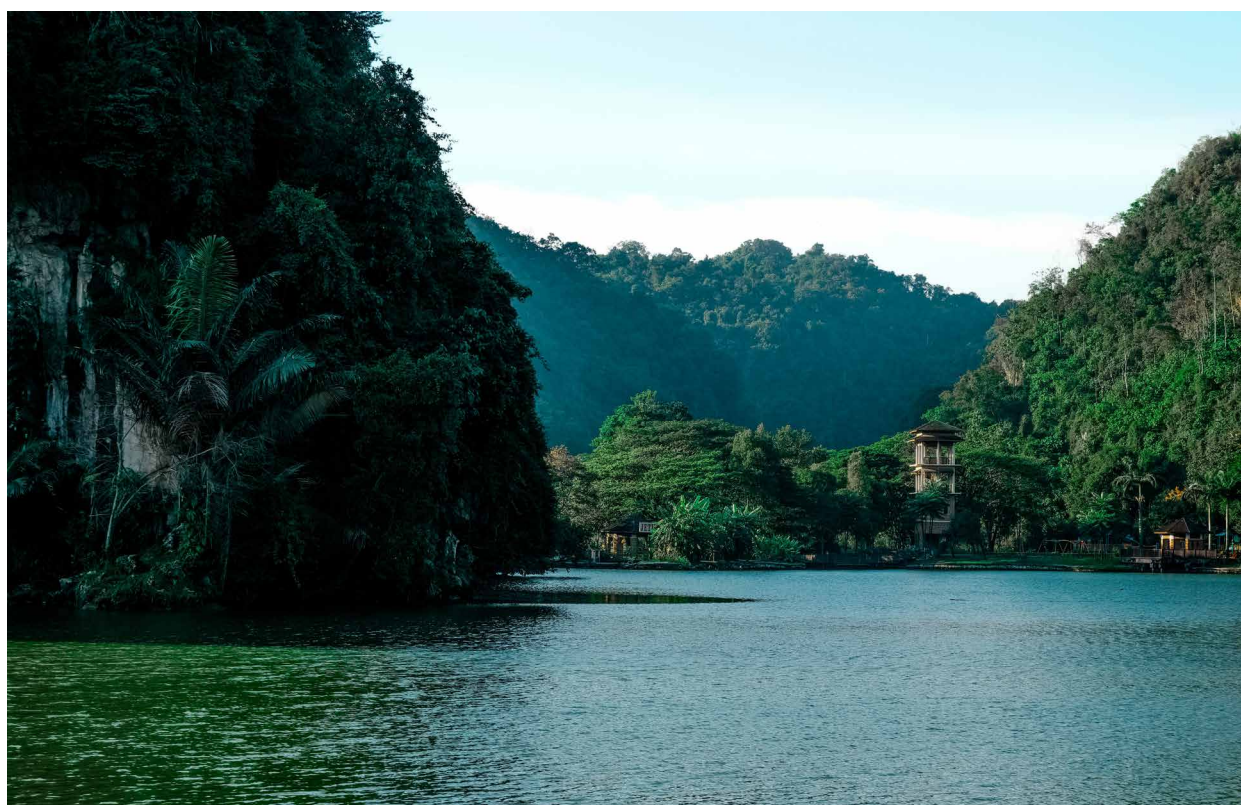
A lot of reinventing of the wheel happens when the same people come to the same problems

with the same experiences, Mr Chaturvedi says. Productive legal discussion requires inclusive engagement of each and every part of the society, including youth; it must not be dominated by a few who decide for all the others.

He likens the legal system historically to a dinner where everyone is served the same dish regardless of preferences, allergies, cultures or dietary restrictions. This system has imposed what it decides is appropriate for everyone, not considering what individuals or communities really care about, nor consulting them. This is the legislative gap that needs to be breached.

**Ajay K. Jha** turns to the question of how laws can be designed to encourage sustainable management of forests without compromising their ecological integrity. More than 170 countries have forest laws, but every year almost 12 million hectares of land are deforested, more than one third of them in tropical forests, he notes.

We have failed to halt deforestation mainly because conservation laws have been less about conservation and more about determining the degree to which resources can be exploited. Many conservation laws have a clear colonial legacy in developing countries, the goal of which was to protect state forest outputs. That has continued, with only a little tweaking here and there.





Some countries barely recognise the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, yet forests can't be protected without them, Mr Jha suggests. In many countries laws are being weakened. In his country, India, the definition of forest has been changed to dilute the distinction between new plantations and old native forests. Other changes to forest conservation laws, national forest policy and environmental impact assessment rules give the government more power to exempt projects from needing permission or environmental review, he reports.

the only way to protect them is to take money for so-called ecosystem services. This is like saying the only way to protect your mother is to sell her, Mr Jha says.

**Txai Suruí** again warns that law can be a double-edged sword, and highlights the destructive role of global supply chains. The biggest threat to Brazilian Indigenous Peoples today is the national Congress, which is trying to legalise illicit mining in tribal territories, putting Indigenous isolation at risk. There are also more than 20,000 illegal cattle

being bred in theoretically protected Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau Indigenous land and this meat is being sold in Europe – France's Casino supermarket chain sells the meat causing our genocide, she says.

When we talk about laws, we need to talk about supply chains, because this is all connected. Who is lobbying and funding the deputies and landowners pushing for these laws? It's companies — like Brazil's JBS — buying the meat raised illegally in our territory and selling it to European supermarkets. We need stricter laws, but we also need other countries to stop purchasing products coming illegally from our sacred land. We need to continue exerting pressure, because the decisions made by Brazil's Congress will have an impact not only on the Indigenous population of Brazil but on the whole world, she adds.



Recent amendments to the biodiversity law have exempted herbal medicine companies from needing permission to harvest forest products, nor do they have to pay compensation for them. The predominance of economic interests in forest governance is why we have failed to balance conservation and sustainable development. More and more natural resources are being managed through a market-based approach. At times we agree to it, hoping the proceeds will go to IPs & LCs, but this hasn't happened, he observes. His organisation investigated the first REDD+ project in India [REDD is a global carbon framework] and found that while very large sums of money changed hands, only a tiny percentage reached the nine local Indigenous councils who were supposed to be involved in the project. They had no information as to the offset amount being traded, nor about what was going to happen.

Indigenous people regard the forest and the ocean as their mothers, and they are being told

From **Ramiro Batzín's** perspective working both locally as an Indigenous leader and on the international level, the international legal framework is crucial.

Countries are passing laws that are not at all in line with the protection of natural resources, nor with laws protecting Indigenous populations, he says. The international framework increasingly recognises the rights of Indigenous populations — the Montreal GBD framework includes eight related targets — but needs to be aligned at the national level, where laws are not evolving. The justice system is not adapted to Indigenous populations, either. While laws are important, we have to see who implements the law and how it is interpreted.

Very often the law is wrongly interpreted, favouring international companies by authorising extraction, for instance, while preventing Indigenous populations from using the forest when they're the ones trying to protect it, he notes.



# JULIETTE BIAO KOUDENOUKPO

Director,  
UN Forum on Forests

The Director of the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat and former environment minister of Benin notes that Indigenous knowledge will be a major topic at the May 2024 UN Forum on Forests, which will review progress on implementing sustainable forest management.

Effective law is key to putting forest policy into practice, establishing clear rules as to who holds rights and who benefits from forest resources. Everyone wins from inclusive legal frameworks that align with protection, conservation and restoration goals in a give-and-take relationship among relevant stakeholders, she says.

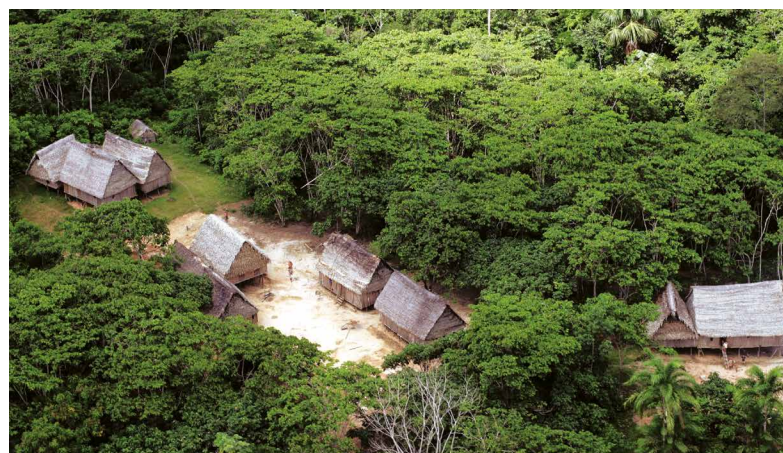
Governments must also make sure laws and policies are applied in a comprehensive manner, which is not necessarily the case. Land degradation is worsening, though we have planted billions of trees. The problem is not financial, it is the failure to involve relevant stakeholders. The right trees weren't planted in the right places for the right purposes, and we didn't monitor them; we just talked about all the trees we were planting. Furthermore, thinking we can restore ecosystems just by planting trees is a recipe for failure — we must address the drivers of deforestation, namely agriculture.

There is a better understanding today of the need to work together. UN tools related to Indigenous Peoples include recognition of their rights under international law; the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII); the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples.



While not legally binding, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognises their rights to self-determination, land, territories, resources, education, culture, health and social services as well as participation in decision-making. The only legally binding instrument is the ILO's 1989 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, or C169, which has only been ratified by 20 countries.

In response to a question about how the UN monitors active threats, such as those faced today by Bolivian Amazon Indigenous groups, Ms Biao Koudenoukpo admits the UN can't impose anything on governments. What it can do is supply countries with data and help them develop policies and laws in line with the international agreements they have signed. The UN also monitors the implementation of international agreements, including those on Indigenous Peoples, as does the special rapporteur.







## SESSION 3

# Reconnecting National and International Funding and Governance to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities for Forest Conservation



- **Rohit Singh**, President, Asian Ranger Federation, Director of Protected and Conserved Area Governance and Management with the WWF (**moderator**)
- **Ana Lucia Orozco**, Environmental Finance Regional Advisor, Biodiversity Finance Initiative, UNDP
- **Andrew Campbell**, CEO, Game Rangers Association of Africa
- **Mundiya Kepanga**, Forest advocate and Huli Customary Chief, Papua New Guinea, accompanied by **Marc Dozier**, Film Director of the «Our Forests» documentary with Mundiya Kepanga
- **Onel Masardule**, Executive Director, Foundation for the Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge



Moderator **Rohit Singh** is President of the Asian Ranger Federation and Director of Protected and Conserved Area Management for the WWF. He has spent most of his career in the bush with rangers, many of them Indigenous and 36% from villages within 20 km of the park where they're stationed.

If Indigenous Peoples and local communities are not included in conservation projects, we can't deliver conservation effectively, he begins. Wherever this has been done well, in terms of both financial and legislative inclusion, we have seen positive results, Mr Singh says, inviting panelists to offer their examples and experience.



Huli leader **Mundiya Kepanga** of Papua New Guinea begins by saying he can neither read nor write. He is not a scientist, just a traditional tribal chief who respects the customs of his ancestors and all they have taught about protecting nature. He is a devoted son of the forest, because his mother delivered him under a tree on a bed of leaves, he explains. He does everything he can to convey the importance of the forest to as many people possible, starring in two documentaries and speaking at museums, schools and international symposia worldwide.

Westerners have a lot of techniques to talk about themselves, he notes. He has engaged in his own storytelling by giving four traditional feather headdresses to museums around Europe as symbols of the forest and its rich biodiversity. A man at COP 21 asked Mundiya what should be done to fight against climate change, saying that since he was wearing feathers, he must be a great wise man. "The only thing I could say is that we have to respect nature", he recalls. "Nobody in this room can control the sun, the rain, the moon, or the wind. If you respect nature, it will respect you back."

Mundiya's first documentary *Brothers of the Trees* was made to share this idea and his ancestors' prophecy teaching that men are the sons of trees, and if trees disappear all of humanity will disappear. He was very proud to receive two Greenpeace Awards for this film, and that it had an impact, he says.

While touring, he taught schoolchildren in Carcassonne how to plant trees. When they won an award, the agriculture minister asked how they got the idea. They said, "Oh, from an old Papuan with feathers on his head." He is very happy people understand his message, and do something about it. In Papua New Guinea, the film also had an impact — Prime Minister James Marape repealed some laws that favoured deforestation, and plans new laws to limit it, Mundiya says.

Scientist and environmental rights specialist **Onel Masardule** is Executive Director of the Foundation for the Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge (FPCI), among other roles. He comes from the Indigenous Guna people of Panama, but we all belong to the same planet, he says. He hailed the presence at the conference of so many Indigenous people from all over the world, noting that they share the same vision of nature despite different situations and languages. Nature is family, and we should never try to master it. We are only part of nature, and it is wiser than we are. Whether climate change or the loss of biodiversity, what we're experiencing is just nature responding to our actions, he declares.







Indigenous people, such as the leaders here at the conference, straddle different worlds as they try to convey their message, Mr Masardule suggests. He spends time in the forest to fulfil his love for nature, and maintains customs, rituals and religious ceremonies, but he also works in production in the farming industry.

Scientists say we need \$150 billion to safeguard biodiversity, but we need the money to fight back against those invading and polluting our land, he says. We're not giving up, because without our land, we can't survive, which is why regional organisations from around Latin America created the Abya Yala Indigenous Forum to work together on biodiversity, climate change, and access to different mechanisms, he adds.

At the global level, the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity also works on climate change, co-launching the Podong Initiative at COP 28 with the IUCN to allow Indigenous Peoples to co-design and co-manage their own financial mechanism to be able to access conservation funds directly and sustainably. Among the initiative's specific targets is to mobilise up to \$200 million in biodiversity and climate finance by 2030 and to ensure that at least 85% of those funds reach Indigenous and local communities.

Mr Masardule ends with a parable about an Indigenous wise man called poor by the outsiders who stripped his forest bare. The wise man says, "What if I went to your town and burned down your

supermarket, your pharmacy, and your building materials? This forest is my supermarket, and my medicine." This connection is why we have such biodiversity and why we love nature, even the rocks. They are living beings, and they have a soul, he says.

As CEO of the Game Rangers' Association of Africa, **Andrew Campbell** advocates for wildlife conservation and harmonious relationships between rangers, communities and nature. Rangers can be considered planetary health workers, with an indispensable role in forest and community conservation.

They engage in conservation activities as varied as the so-called Big Five iconic African animals people come to see, he suggests.

Rangers protect cultural heritage, fight wildlife crime, and respond to emergencies, like a lioness might protect her cubs. They look after visitors and community members and save lives with their first aid skills. Like leopards, rangers patrol a territory and monitor what's happening there, collecting data and monitoring wildlife.

Like elephants, with whom people feel an instant connection, rangers connect people and nature through community engagement, visitor education and human-wildlife conflict mitigation, Mr Campbell notes. And just as buffalo restore savanna lands through hoof action, rangers also restore landscapes, removing alien plants and species and rewilding areas that have lost their biodiversity.



Last comes the rhino, which commands respect: as rangers we must respect nature, respect the people in the areas where we work, and respect the law, he says. His association represents 2,600 rangers working across Africa, providing networking opportunities, advocating for better living conditions and supporting projects to professionalise the industry alongside the International Ranger Federation and the Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA).

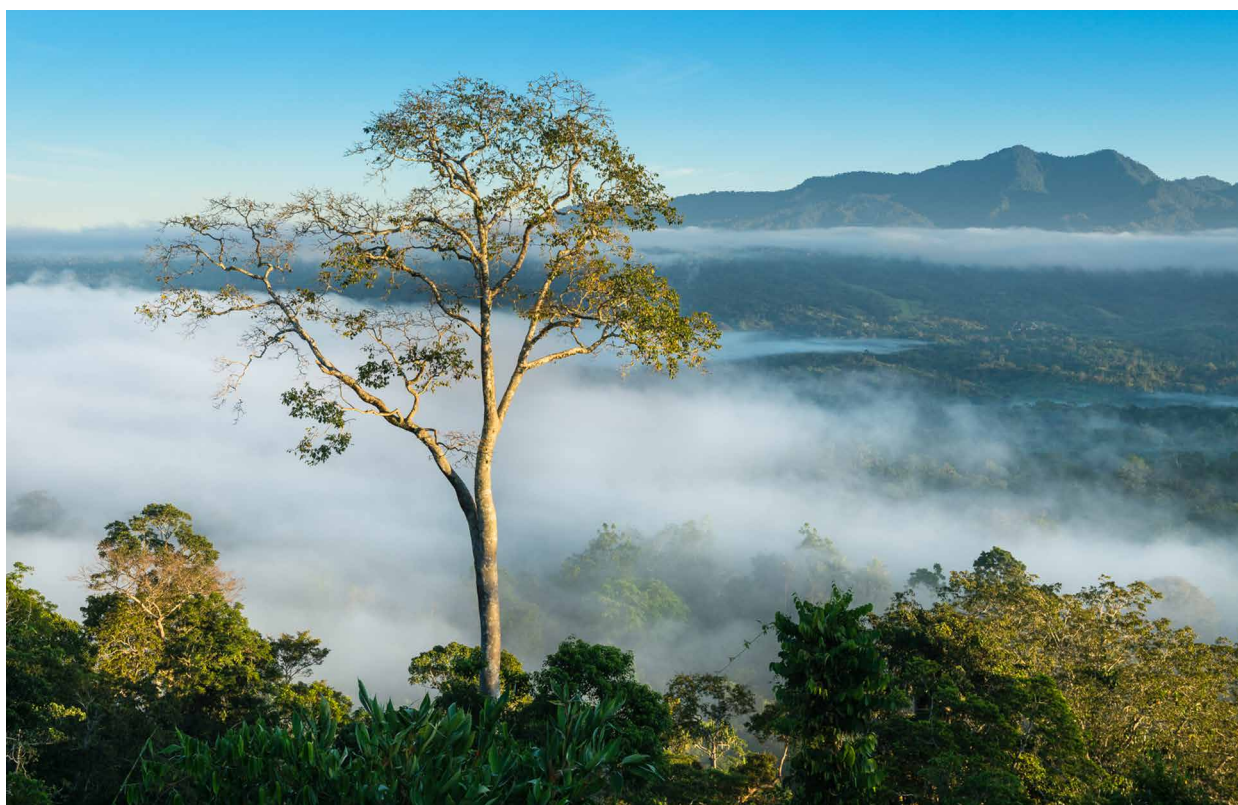
Biologist **Ana Lucia Orozco** is an environmental finance specialist advising the UNDP's Biodiversity Financing Initiative (BIOFIN) and coordinating Costa Rica's Biodiversity Financing Initiative. "Finance isn't everything, but it's really important: without cocoa, there's no chocolate", she says. Funding is needed for law enforcement by rangers, for forest and biodiversity restoration, and for development of sustainable livelihoods, and must be delivered effectively. As we have heard over and over, our current financial model encourages unsustainable practices, including deforestation, Ms Orozco states. It must be transformed to a nature-positive model.

BIOFIN first identifies what policy, regulatory and financial mechanisms are in place at the national level. It then reviews biodiversity expenditure, identifying nature-positive and nature-negative financial flows from both public and private sources.

Next it pinpoints biodiversity goals, policies and hotspots and how much is needed to recover, restore, conserve or expand them. The last step is developing finance plans together with stakeholders and national authorities including finance, planning and environment ministers, to deliver a portfolio of financial solutions tailored to meet needs at the different levels.

It's not only about increasing and diversifying revenues; it's also necessary to reduce or avoid future costs and risks of biodiversity loss by developing payment-for-ecosystem-services schemes, she suggests. These include bioeconomy credits for incubators of nature- and people-positive businesses, and the reform of negative subsidies to address the underlying causes of destruction of nature.

Expanding on grassroots solutions, **Mundiya Kepanga** speaks of work with communities in Papua New Guinea to develop alternative economic solutions allowing them to protect the primary forest. One example is a vanilla agroforestry project in the Sepik region, which received support of over €100 million from Europe to enable very poor landowners to plant vanilla on trees. This gives them an incentive not to sell their primary forest. In another region, a village decided without any government support to rent its protected primary forest to scientists, advancing research and conservation while earning income.





Another solution is to plant secondary forests in damaged areas like savannas. Harvesting these planted trees and then replanting helps avoid cutting the primary forest. The Papua New Guinea government is pursuing this policy. All this requires a lot of money, but Indigenous leaders and poor populations can implement projects if they have support from the UN, the international community, and the EU, he says.

incubator for Indigenous sustainable tourism businesses. With funds raised from Costa Rica's development bank system, Raíces incubates 14 entrepreneurs per cohort twice a year, with 1,400 hectares being used sustainably through these initiatives.

International cooperation with national funding is very important for tailoring mechanisms to fit needs, Ms Orozco says. The financial sector's strict rules sometimes prevent Indigenous people from accessing funds, but we can make the case for alternative processes allowing these entrepreneurs to be eligible even without individual land ownership.

**Onel Masardule** sees some progress towards better inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in biodiversity discussions. The Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystems (IPBES) recognises Indigenous and local knowledge systems as relevant to all its activities, and COP 28 recognises Indigenous knowledge with regard to climate change. Scientific and Indigenous knowledge are complementary and must be put at the same level to improve conservation. Despite progress internationally, we still have to work hard to translate this to the national level, especially with regard to the commercial use of biodiversity, he notes.

Mundiya Kepanga ends with a question. "In Papua New Guinea we only own the forest. Imagine that your husband or wife is very sick and needs to go to the hospital but you're very poor and you have no money. What do you do? Sell your trees, or sell your children? We're all human beings, and even we Indigenous people need money to survive, so the best solution for us is not to sell our forests but to have help to find economic solutions to protect them", he concludes.

Next, **Ana Lucia Orozco** expands on UNDP-BIOFIN's work on Costa Rica's national biodiversity strategy. More than 3,200 people participated, with 41% from Indigenous groups. The resulting biodiversity finance plan prioritises the development of alternative livelihoods, mainly tourism-related, to make forest protection sustainable. The plan engaged Indigenous people from the start, identifying potential projects and defining what kind of tourism they wanted, where they wanted it, and where no tourism should be allowed, such as sacred places, she explains. The result was 60 potential projects in seven Indigenous territories. To support them, Costa Rica and BIOFIN created the Raíces (Roots)

To an audience question about secondary market solutions to sustain direct investment, **Ana Lucia Orozco** replies that Costa Rica's Raíces is catalysing many other types of finance alongside the development bank system's multiple-year allocation of funds. They work with ministries to address investment gaps and requests from communities to improve livelihoods, water, sanitation, and access to bridges and roads, for instance. Entrepreneurs are also connecting through tourism market associations. This catalytic initiative shows different resources can be pulled in to meet needs. It's not one silver bullet that will solve everything, but a portfolio of financial solutions, she suggests.

**Andrew Campbell** expands on rangers' activities, which link closely to what Indigenous Peoples and local communities are doing to protect natural landscapes and cultural heritage and connect people to the environment. The vast majority of rangers in Africa — 90% of his federation's 2,600 members — come from local communities. They often live within park boundaries, and many are Indigenous.







The ideal model is collaborative stewardship, with rangers working hand-in-hand with communities. We must protect biodiversity not only inside but also outside national parks. We have community rangers in Africa who work outside protected areas, but they receive no pay. That inequality between them and uniformed rangers inside the parks must be addressed, while working more closely together, he suggests.

In Zambia, rangers working for community resource boards outside of national parks are benefiting from carbon schemes in some areas. Things like this should be explored to allow rangers to benefit from the nature which belongs to them, as they're often the breadwinners in these Indigenous and local communities, he concludes.

**Rohit Singh** closes with a story of a government ranger friend from the Indigenous Nyishi tribe of India. For generations the tribe hunted great Indian hornbills to use their bills in traditional

headdresses. Science was clear that the great hornbill was in danger of extinction, but it was very hard for this ranger to implement new laws against killing the birds, because that's what his father and grandfather had done. He came up with a solution to manufacture hornbills out of other materials, and promoted it among the community. Now they all use the fake bills, while maintaining the headdress tradition. The ranger went even further, persuading the community to protect hornbill nests, and now the hornbill population is increasing, Mr Singh reports.

As Mr Masardule was saying, scientific knowledge and Indigenous knowledge complement each other; it's not one against the other – we're all in this together, and we have to find a solution together, Mr Singh says. He winds up the discussion with a sobering statistic: there are more hairdressers in the UK and more people working on golf courses in the United States than there are rangers in all the world's protected areas.



# TASSO AZEVEDO

Founder, Mapbiomas



Mr Azevedo is Founder of MapBiomas, a network of organisations in 14 countries working for the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources. He notes that in recent years, forest conservation has been driven by the misguided idea that carbon markets will fund large-scale forest conservation. This is perverse, as the only way to get credits is to first prove you've been emitting a lot of carbon.

Indigenous communities occupy one third of the Amazon. As MapBiomas shows, over the last 40 years the Amazon had the worst deforestation on the planet, but only 1% was on Indigenous lands. As these people were not emitting in the first place, they can't receive funding. Only those who were emitting before are compensated. We need mechanisms that are not attached to carbon or a specific service of the forest, but that simply recognise that forests benefit all of humanity. This is the idea behind the Tropical Forests Forever Fund that Brazil will propose at COP 28, which Mr Azevedo helped conceive.

Trees in the Amazon release 20 billion tons of moisture into the atmosphere per day, which is critical for climate and agriculture. If we had to use energy to perform this service, it would cost \$1 trillion per day. That's nice to know, but useless, he says. Society should pay for the standing forest just because it's there, providing universal benefits, from carbon sequestration to temperature regulation, as forests keep the planet 0.5° cooler, he suggests.

The Amazon Fund was a partial solution. In Brazil, deforestation declined by 80% between 2003 and 2012, but it was impossible to know who or what was responsible. Instead of trying to identify whom to compensate, the Fund raises contributions based on Brazil's past reductions in deforestation and disburses

them to conservation and sustainability projects. Even simpler, the Tropical Forests Forever Fund would pay a certain amount of money per hectare of standing forest per year — say \$30. If you have the same forest at year's end as at the beginning, you get this money, regardless of your past actions or future promises. One hectare of forest is there, performing a service, and as a global community we should pay for that, he says.

There would also be a penalty deduction of 100 hectares per hectare destroyed. If you maintain 1 ha you get \$30, but if you clear-cut one hectare, you have to deduct 100 hectares from what you can claim, so the disincentive is \$3,000 per hectare. If there was zero deforestation in the roughly 1 billion hectares of tropical forest — which is highly unlikely — paying for that would only cost \$30 billion per year. That's nothing, he adds.

This mechanism would also compensate restoration by paying for new forest. The fund eliminates the need for complex carbon calculations and baselines by only assessing forest cover, which is easy to monitor by satellite. Tropical Forests Forever borrows from a Costa Rican programme paying for forest protection and restoration through a simple mechanism financed by oil taxes.

Simplicity is key, Mr Azevedo suggests. Forested and deforested area would be assessed country by country. For countries to qualify, deforestation must not be higher than 0.5% of their forest cover. Conversely, maintaining deforestation below 0.1% guarantees a country will always receive the credits. Each country decides how to distribute these funds, but each must apply the penalties for deforestation, with the very simple rule that if you cut down a hectare of forest, you lose \$3,000 in potential credits.









# Workshops

FCI conference attendees were invited to choose one of three workshops offering the chance to dive more deeply and interactively into conference panel topics. These practical breakout sessions produced recommendations to complement the key messages from the panels and lay the groundwork for a common Call for Action, available on the Forests and Communities Initiative's website.

## RECOMMENDATIONS



### Topic 1: "Effective Forest Conservation by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: Rights-based and Gender-just Approaches"

→ Workshop rapporteur:

**Valentina Figuera Martínez**, Coordinator of Gender Justice Campaign, Global Forest Coalition

- = Build IPs & LCs' capacity to understand and defend their rights
- = Improve legislation on IPs & LCs' land rights, and its implementation and enforcement
- = Move from symbolic to genuine IP & LC participation in international decision-making
- = Collect and communicate independent data on IPs & LCs' lands and needs
- = Ensure free, prior and informed consent
- = Eliminate top-down approaches to conservation
- = Respect social and cultural aspects
- = Support community innovation
- = Promote gender parity in local committees and processes
- = Provide resources and conditions to facilitate women's safe and equal participation
- = Model gender equality in external partners' own processes and teams
- = Promote alliances to advance gender-just legislation
- = Promote participatory management plans and mapping with IPs & LCs, and rangers
- = Make ranger work environments more women-friendly, safe and inclusive





## Topic 2: “The Use of Environmental Law in Forest Conservation”

→ Workshop rapporteur:

**Roberto Coll**, Executive Officer, IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL)

### NATIONALLY

- = Improve coherence and policy continuity among multiple and often conflicting laws
- = Integrate indigenous customary law into national legal systems
- = Strengthen private sector liability and obligation to respect IPs & LCs’ tenure rights
- = Improve IPs & LCs’ access to justice politically and financially
- = Improve access to information to empower IPs & LCs and civil society (Aarhus Convention)
- = Consult rangers on legislation to ensure coherence with conservation objectives
- = Strengthen legal enforcement mandate for non-uniformed rangers

### INTERNATIONALLY

- = Build capacity of lawyers to understand and address Indigenous Peoples’ issues.
- = Move away from top-down approach
- = Increase effective IP & LC representation at the international level and at COPs
- = Address financial inequality in access to legal defence and justice
- = Address disproportionate power of oil and corporate lobbies
- = Target supply chain demand, as offer may not subject to the rule of law



## Topic 3: “Reconnecting National and International Funding and Governance to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities for Forest Conservation”

→ Workshop rapporteur:

**Monica Alvarez Malvido**, Development Officer, International Ranger Federation

**Ramson Karmushu**, Member of the Resource Mobilization team, International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity

- = Adapt financial architecture to allow IPs & LCs to access funds directly
- = Partner with IPs & LCs to co-design regional funds and other innovative financial mechanisms and increase percentage of funds actually reaching communities
- = Eliminate administrative and other barriers to reduce need for financial intermediaries
- = Build IPs & LCs’ capacity to receive and manage funds themselves
- = Consult communities on choice of intermediaries when/if needed
- = Avoid using intermediaries as consultants (conflict of interest/unnecessary layer)
- = Intermediaries used on short-term basis only while building community capacity
- = Work to understand IPs & LCs’ needs and help them to formulate these needs
- = Change donor mentality to one of collaboration with IPs & LCs as rightsholders
  - \* Visit project sites to understand cultural and conservation contexts
  - \* Establish clear prior consultation and consent processes
  - \* Provide support and follow-up over longer periods
- = Improve recognition of IP & LC conservation actors to increase motivation
- = Redesign land tenure system to better protect Indigenous Peoples, especially women
- = Foster networking among funders to propel shift in donor mentalities
- = Understand and prioritise community needs over donors’ wishes
  - \* Negative examples cited by rangers of donor providing \$5,000 drone to make publicity videos when rangers lack basics like shoes, gloves and protective gear; fancy SUVs when rangers working on horseback want horses
- = Identify resilient, robust grassroot organisations to sustain implementation of projects
- = Train communities in project management, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting
- = Develop community-friendly reporting mechanisms anchored in trust
  - \* Reduce red-tape demands requiring excessive time and/or costly expert help
- = Clearly differentiate grants from investments.





## Closing Remarks

- **Cyrielle Vaucois Pontes**, Forests and Communities Initiative Manager, Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation
- **Monica Alvarez Malvido**, Development Officer, International Ranger Federation
- **Valentina Figuera Martínez**, Coordinator of Gender Justice Campaign, Global Forest Coalition
- **Christina Voigt Chair**, Climate Change Specialist Group of the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL)
- **Ramson Karmushu**, Member of the Resource Mobilization team, International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity



On behalf of all FCI partner organisations, Forests and Communities Initiative Manager **Cyrielle Vaucois Pontes** thanks all participants for attending this inaugural conference, and applauds speakers for their insightful messages. The recommendations that emerged from preparatory webinars over the past year and this conference informs a common Call for Action as a concrete tool all can use in their work and communities. The Call for action is available on the [FCI's website](#) in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

FCI will hold a conference every two years — the next will be in 2025. FCI is also launching an annual call for projects every year in June that fit the FCI's objectives for community forest conservation. Applications can be made through the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation website [FCI: Call for Projects](#).





## Closing Concert

by Raine Piyako



Raine Piyako, son of Chief Benki Piyako, carries the profound wisdom of his people, the Asháninka indigenous community, spanning Brazil and parts of Peru. Raine's music resonates with ancient prayer chants and messages of gratitude. Raine, accompanied by his wife Rosane Txukukatxi Puyanawa and his cousin Piyãko Piyãko, led the audience in songs connecting the audience to the Amazon and Mother Earth, drawing on the spiritual essence of his heritage. Raine's impassioned plea for environmental stewardship echoed through the venue, leaving a lasting impression on all who bore witness. Through his music, Raine emerges as a leader, advocating for the Earth and the preservation of indigenous cultures. His performance, a celebration of love, life, and purpose, serves as a poignant reminder of the urgent need to protect our forests.



# ACRONYMS

<b>AIPP</b>	Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact
<b>BIOFIN</b>	Biodiversity Finance Initiative
<b>CBD</b>	Convention on Biological Diversity
<b>COP</b>	Conference of the Parties
<b>C169</b>	International Labor Organization Convention No. 169 (Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989)
<b>FCI</b>	Forests and Communities Initiative
<b>GFC</b>	Global Forest Coalition
<b>IFFB</b>	International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity
<b>IFBES</b>	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
<b>IPs</b>	Indigenous Peoples
<b>LCs</b>	Local communities
<b>MAPEO</b>	Mapping and Participatory Exploration Organizer
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>NDCs</b>	Nationally Determined Contributions
<b>REDD+</b>	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
<b>RSPO</b>	Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>WWF</b>	World Wide Fund for Nature
<b>IUCN WCEL</b>	World Commission on Environmental Law of the International Union for Conservation of Nature



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# CO-ORGANIZERS



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## PRINCE ALBERT II OF MONACO FOUNDATION

The Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation is a global non-profit organisation committed to progressing Planetary Health for present and future generations. Founded by HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco in 2006, the Foundation exists to promote a new relationship with nature and the innovations that can impact this change. The Foundation aims to bring humanity together to empower impactful solutions for our planet's biodiversity, climate, ocean and water resources. It works in three main geographical areas: the Mediterranean Basin, the Polar Regions and the Least developed countries.

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## IUCN WORLD COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

The IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL) advances environmental law around the globe by providing specialized knowledge and assistance to strengthen the legal foundations of the conservation of nature and sustainable development through the conceptual advancement of environmental principles, norms and laws, and by building the capacity of communities to benefit from the environmental rule of law.

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INTERNATIONAL  
RANGER  
FEDERATION

## INTERNATIONAL RANGER FEDERATION

The International Ranger Federation (IRF) was founded on 31st July 1992. It is the global body that represents rangers and ranger associations across the world. The Federation's mission is to develop, advance and promote throughout the world community, the Ranger profession and its critical role in the conservation of natural and cultural resources. Over 100 Ranger associations from national, state and territorial entities have affiliated with the IRF, including several Rangers from around the world who have Provisional membership status whilst they attempt to establish Ranger associations in their countries. It has a Board of Directors with ranger representatives from all the regions in the world.

[www.internationalrangers.org](http://www.internationalrangers.org)

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# CO-ORGANIZERS



## GLOBAL FOREST COALITION

The Global Forest Coalition (GFC) is an international coalition of NGOs and Indigenous Peoples' Organizations defending social justice and the rights of forest peoples in forest policies. The GFC was founded in 2000 by 19 NGOs and Indigenous Peoples' Organizations (IPOs) from all over the world. It is a successor to the NGO Forest Working Group, which was originally established in 1995. GFC participates in international forest policy meetings and organizes joint advocacy campaigns on issues like Indigenous Peoples' rights, the need for socially-just forest policy and the need to address the underlying causes of forest loss.

[globalforestcoalition.org](http://globalforestcoalition.org) • Tel +31-6-16858011

📷 [gfc\\_forests](#)

## INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY

The International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) was formed during the III Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CoP III) in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in November 1996. The IIFB is a collection of representatives from indigenous governments, indigenous non-governmental organizations and indigenous scholars and activists that organize around the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other important international environmental meetings to help coordinate indigenous strategies at these meetings, provide advice to the government parties, and influence the interpretation of government obligations to recognize and respect indigenous rights to the knowledge and resources.

<https://iifb-indigenous.org/>

📷 [iifb\\_indigenous](#)



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