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**"Recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights in the context of the climate crisis, biodiversity governance and territorial integrity: focusing on nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples, including pastoralists and shifting cultivators"**

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# Indigenous Peoples and the Climate Crisis: Advancing Rights-Based Climate Action Through an Indigenous-Led Global Finance Platform and Exchange

Expert paper presenter

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**Introduction**

Distinguished members of the Permanent Forum, esteemed colleagues, and honored delegates,

This submission is grounded in deep respect, gratitude, and a profound sense of intergenerational responsibility. As reflected in my statement to the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), Indigenous Peoples globally are rising with clarity, purpose, and unity at a moment of profound planetary crisis. We stand not as victims of history, but as visionaries and architects of the world's next economy, leaders whose systems of reciprocity, regeneration, and relational governance hold essential answers to the world's most urgent climate and ecological challenges.

From my homelands at Lake Quinault to global finance and policy forums in Siem Reap, Baku, Bellagio, São Paulo, Nice, Boston, New York, Washington, and beyond, one message has become unmistakably clear: the dominant economic systems of today, rooted in extraction and measured by exploitation, are failing humanity, failing the climate, and failing the planet itself.

Yet Indigenous Peoples are not seeking entry into these failing systems. We are advancing the next paradigm: regenerative, spiritually grounded economic systems that center balance, reciprocity, kinship, and accountability to future generations.

It is within this context of urgency and opportunity that this submission presents a formal proposal for our vision of one of the most important Indigenous-led global instruments to meet the challenges of our generation: The Indigenous Finance Platform and Exchange (IFX).

**I. Climate Impacts on Indigenous Peoples: Inequity and Urgency**

Indigenous Peoples are disproportionately affected by accelerating climate impacts, including:

- Heightened biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse;
- Rapid glacial melt, sea-level rise, and coastal erosion;
- Intensifying drought, wildfire, storms, and water insecurity;
- Disruptions to seasonal indicators essential for food systems and cultural practice;
- Forced displacement from ancestral territories.

Despite stewarding vast ecosystems that underpin global climate stability, Indigenous Peoples receive less than 1% of global climate finance directly, profoundly limiting our ability to advance Indigenous-led climate solutions.

**II. Climate Interventions That Reproduce Historical Harms**

Many climate and conservation initiatives, though well intentioned, continue to reproduce colonial patterns:

- Conservation areas that exclude Indigenous governance;
- Renewable energy and critical minerals extraction without FPIC;

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- Carbon markets that commodify Indigenous lands without Indigenous oversight;
- Funding pathways that sideline Indigenous nations in favor of State or NGO intermediaries.

These dynamics perpetuate harm under a green banner. As emphasized at EMRIP, Indigenous Peoples are no longer merely moral advisors, we are strategic partners essential to global recovery and regeneration.

Global systems must move from consultation to co-governance, and from transactional approaches to relational and intergenerational accountability.

**III. Indigenous Knowledge and Governance: Foundations for Global Climate Resilience**

Indigenous knowledge systems developed through millennia of observation, practice, and stewardship are proven to:

- Enhance the resilience of ecosystems;
- Protect biodiversity;
- Sustain food systems;
- Reduce wildfire and disaster risk;
- Restore degraded lands and waters.

Indigenous worldviews are redefining prosperity by valuing living systems, relational governance, and intergenerational well-being. These values increasingly shape global policy dialogues, including through the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council on Natural Capital (GFC-NC), where I serve as a Council Member to help advance frameworks that honor Indigenous laws and knowledge.

Indigenous perspectives are no longer viewed as supplementary; they are increasingly recognized as indispensable to natural capital policy, climate governance, and economic transformation.

The world is finally listening. The imperative now is to move from recognition to resourcing, and from consultation to co-governance.

**IV. Advancements at the World Economic Forum: Building the Foundations for IFX**

At the WEF's Annual Meeting of the GFC-NC, significant progress was made toward designing a global architecture for Indigenous-led climate finance. The Values and Systems Change Working Group adopted the theme: "Reimagining Our Economic Relationship with Nature"

The Working Group's mission is to design a global Indigenous-led financial platform that redefines how value flows through the world economy, an effort aimed at piloting the IFX as a transparent, spiritually grounded, regenerative mechanism connecting Indigenous Peoples' communities, nature-positive enterprises, and global capital markets.

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This work positions Indigenous Peoples as co-creators of new global financial norms, advancing a needed shift from extractive economics to regenerative systems.

## V. The Indigenous Finance Exchange (IFX): A Transformational Path Forward

The IFX is not an incremental policy tool. It is a systemic shift rooted in Indigenous worldviews and aligned with international human rights frameworks. It offers a pathway toward economic systems that honor ecological balance, spiritual integrity, and intergenerational responsibility.

### 1. Vision and Purpose

The IFX seeks to:

- Redefine global economic value around reciprocity and ecological integrity;
- Create a transparent, Indigenous-governed financial platform;
- Support Indigenous-led climate mitigation, adaptation, cultural, and ecological stewardship;
- Demonstrate that finance can serve as a force for life.

### 2. Reorienting Global Capital Toward Regeneration and Justice

At its core, the IFX reorients global capital flows away from extractive economies and toward life-affirming systems grounded in Indigenous law, values, and governance. Unlike conventional financial mechanisms that treat nature as a commodity, the IFX positions the Earth as a living relative, an understanding shared across Indigenous nations.

This shift transforms finance from a tool of exploitation into a mechanism for restoration. The IFX establishes new standards for transparency, ethical investment, and community-led accountability, giving Indigenous Peoples the authority to govern climate finance with the same rigor with which they govern their lands and cultures.

In doing so, the IFX charts a path toward the world's first truly regenerative economic architecture, capable of meeting the scale and moral urgency of the climate crisis.

## VI. Territorial Integrity, Statelessness, and the Right to Self-Determination

*Examining State Use of Article 46 of UNDRIP and Advancing Holistic Interpretations Grounded in International Law*

Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination is not a challenge to the territorial integrity of States. To the contrary, it is one of the strongest foundations for national stability, environmental stewardship, and peaceful coexistence. Yet some States have increasingly invoked Article 46 of UNDRIP to justify limiting Indigenous jurisdiction and autonomy. This use is inconsistent with the Declaration's text, history, and purpose.

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A faithful and holistic interpretation of Article 46 confirms that it does not constrain Indigenous self-determination, but rather ensures that both Indigenous Peoples and States exercise their rights in harmony with one another and with international human rights standards.

Below are responses to the guiding questions posed under Theme 1.

**1. How does recognition of Indigenous self-determination protect lands, knowledge, culture, and reinforce coexistence rather than conflict?**

Recognition of self-determination:

- Strengthens environmental and climate resilience;
- Protects traditional knowledge systems essential for disaster prevention and ecological restoration;
- Ensures cultural continuity, language revitalization, and community well-being;
- Reduces conflict by clarifying governance authority and enabling collaborative management;
- Supports national climate goals through Indigenous land stewardship.

Self-determination does not threaten State authority; it enhances State legitimacy and strengthens the social contract by grounding governance in justice, sustainability, and cultural survival.

**2. How can Indigenous Peoples exercise self-determination within national constitutions and laws?**

Indigenous Peoples exercise self-determination in ways fully compatible with national constitutional orders, including through:

- Constitutional recognition of Indigenous nations and governance systems;
- Recognition of Indigenous legal orders and juridical authority;
- Co-governance and shared stewardship of lands and resources;
- Indigenous parliaments, autonomous councils, and institutions;
- Treaty-based nation-to-nation agreements;
- Direct access to climate finance and Indigenous-controlled financial institutions such as the IFX.

These approaches embed Indigenous governance within national frameworks while respecting cultural distinctiveness and historical continuity.

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### 3. What legal, administrative, and participatory mechanisms should States establish?

States should adopt mechanisms that enable Indigenous self-determination while respecting national laws, including:

**Legal mechanisms**

- Constitutional amendments recognizing Indigenous jurisdiction;
- Statutory protection of FPIC;
- Legal recognition of Indigenous laws and courts;
- Legal protection for mobility and seasonal land-use.

**Administrative mechanisms**

- Indigenous-led land registries;
- Indigenous representation in national environmental and resource ministries;
- Co-management structures for waters, forests, protected areas, and cultural sites.

**Participatory mechanisms**

- Permanent Indigenous advisory and decision-making bodies;
- Co-governed natural resource boards;
- Indigenous-led climate finance platforms such as the IFX.

**Economic mechanisms**

- Revenue-sharing agreements;
- Indigenous-governed nature credit systems;
- Indigenous-led financial instruments and exchanges.

Together, these mechanisms create a rights-based framework where self-determination and national integrity reinforce one another.

### 4. How can UN entities, academia, and others support States in recognizing self-determination, mobility, and seasonal land-use?

**UN entities can:**

- Provide technical support for implementing UNDRIP;
- Develop model legislation and guidance on Article 46;
- Support Indigenous-led territorial mapping and governance systems;

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- Ensure Indigenous access to climate finance, including through the IFX.

**Academia can:**

- Document benefits of Indigenous mobility and seasonal governance;
- Support Indigenous data sovereignty and knowledge systems;
- Train jurists and policymakers in Indigenous rights.

**Civil society and multilateral partners can:**

- Support Indigenous institutional capacity;
- Promote regional approaches to cross-border Indigenous governance;
- Develop frameworks that harmonize mobility with national borders.

Recognizing Indigenous mobility and seasonal land-use strengthens ecological stability and enhances national climate adaptation strategies.

## VII. Why IFX Is the Right Mechanism for This Moment

The IFX proposal is not theoretical; it is already being built through:

- EMRIP's call for Indigenous economic self-determination;
- WEF's integration of Indigenous worldviews into natural capital frameworks;
- Global partnerships across finance, ecology, spirituality, and technology;
- A global movement of Indigenous leadership rising across all regions.

As I stated at EMRIP:

> "Indigenous Peoples are no longer the moral conscience at the margins. We are the strategic partners at the center of global recovery and regeneration."

The IFX operationalizes this truth, transforming recognition into resourcing, and principles into practice.

## Conclusion

The Indigenous Finance Exchange (IFX) represents a decisive and unprecedented step toward aligning global climate action with Indigenous rights, values, and governance systems. It offers a transformational framework capable of turning climate finance into a regenerative, spiritually grounded, and equitable global architecture that empowers Indigenous Peoples while safeguarding the Earth's living systems.

The IFX will stand as a pilot-ready demonstration of what the next era of global finance can look like, finance that moves in right relationship with land, water, people, and spirit. It will serve not only Indigenous Peoples' communities but the entire global community by establishing a living

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model of how capital can flow in ways that restore ecosystems, strengthen societies, and uphold human dignity.

This is more than a financial platform. It is a call for systemic transformation:

- from extraction to reciprocity,
- from short-term profit to intergenerational stewardship,
- from colonial economic frameworks to Indigenous-led regenerative systems.

For the UN system, this is a historic opportunity to champion a solution equal to the scale of the climate crisis and aligned with core human rights commitments. Supporting the IFX is not only an investment in Indigenous Peoples, it is an investment in global stability, biodiversity, climate resilience, and the long-term survival of humanity.

The IFX shows what is possible when Indigenous leadership is not placed at the margins, but at the center of global recovery and planetary regeneration.

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