

International Expert Group Meeting
**“Conservation and the rights of indigenous peoples” (Articles 29 and 32 of the
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)**

23-25 January 2019
United Nations Office in Nairobi, Kenya

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
January 14, 2019

Dear Forum Members and Meeting Participants:

The [Conservation Initiative on Human Rights \(CIHR\)](#)¹ is very pleased to join the International Expert Group Meeting on Conservation and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, through the participation of four of our members—Conservation International, the International Union of Conservation of Nature, The Nature Conservancy, and the World Wide Fund for Nature. Our thanks to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) for inviting these CIHR members to join your discussions. The CIHR partners as a group would like to share the following thoughts with the Expert Group.

The CIHR was formed 10 years ago. Today CIHR members can point to strong, sustainable natural resource use and conservation partnerships with indigenous peoples in many parts of the world, an extensive collective track record of working to improve the security of indigenous rights, and widespread recognition across CIHR member organizations that areas and territories governed by indigenous peoples and local communities have effectively sustained most of the biodiversity of our planet. We also see progress in the development and implementation of our policies and standards for working with indigenous peoples and local communities, consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and International Labour Organization’s Convention 169, as well as REDD+, Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility and other standards regarding indigenous rights.

At the same time, we also recognize areas where we can continue to improve, and we see significant potential to work in closer alliance with indigenous peoples and local communities. These closer alliances are needed, for example, to: increase the reach and effectiveness of indigenous and human rights-based approaches in the conservation community; continue to influence global conventions and national policies in ways that address a wider set of issues, such as lack of recognition and enforcement

¹ The CIHR was established in 2009 as a result of conversations between the CEOs of the member organizations, which at that time included Birdlife International, Conservation International, Fauna & Flora International, IUCN, The Nature Conservancy, Wetlands International, Wildlife Conservation Society, and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). We believe that by working collectively, we can better advance our work to promote the positive links between conservation and rights of people to secure their livelihoods, enjoy healthy and productive environments and live with dignity. To learn more please visit <http://www.thecihr.org/>.

of indigenous rights and negative impacts on indigenous environmental defenders; increase the space and financing for indigenous-led conservation and sustainable use initiatives; and increase the development and use of technology that facilitates recognition and enforcement of rights, such as early warning systems for encroachment or illegal activity in indigenous areas. We also must find more effective ways to work in places where indigenous rights are not yet recognized or protected.

There is urgency on all fronts. Globally, threats to indigenous areas and territories and the resilience of our natural home are growing in the vast acceleration of unsustainable development, climate change, unprecedented infrastructure investment, conversion of natural habitats and natural resource exploitation. We need collective action.

In this spirit, the CIHR suggests two ways we could collaborate to improve the conservation community's contributions to securing indigenous and community land and resource rights and associated biodiversity and climate benefits:

- A dialogue engaging indigenous peoples, government and non-state conservation actors, funding partners and United Nations representatives to develop pragmatic strategies to better promote the implementation of international principles on indigenous rights in weak governance contexts, where indigenous peoples, territories and cultures, as well as biodiversity, are under threat; and
- A meeting of senior representatives of indigenous peoples' organizations and CIHR member organizations to discuss standards, share implementation challenges and strategies to overcome them, and invigorate collaboration.

Conservation International will facilitate a session at your Nairobi meeting and will include discussion of these two recommendations.

CIHR organisations also plan to share a more detailed summary of progress and outstanding challenges in building conservation approaches that promote and protect rights at the 18th session of the UNPFII this Spring.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to your discussions.



For CIHR-related inquiries, please contact Adrienne McKeehan (amckeehan@conservation.org).