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While the natural world burns, we debate punctuation – we need urgent transformative change to save nature

*Indigenous Peoples and local communities’ perspectives on the Global Biodiversity Framework to save nature*

“The natural world is burning and we have spent too many hours in a bureaucratic world of policy discussing semantics,” said the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity today in their closing statement at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) meetings in Nairobi.

“The way these negotiations have taken place reflect a clear divorce from the urgent realities and the emergency situation we are in. This ‘business as usual’ process of intergovernmental negotiations must change.”

IIFB strongly believes that a Human Rights based approach would make the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) truly transformative and consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other international human rights law, as a minimum standard,” said the statement.

With the support of many in the scientific community—including experts advising UN decision makers—Indigenous leaders at the meeting urged Parties to the CBD to ensure that the final plan for protecting the world’s remaining biodiversity also safeguards and scales up recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and their unmatched ability to conserve nature, which is vital to preventing climate change, biodiversity loss and pandemic risk.

Despite strong evidence of the role played by IPLC’s in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and the mitigation and adaptation to climate change, many of the IPLC’s proposals in GBF remain in square brackets.

“Indigenous Peoples don’t see nature as separate from people, and neither should the Global Biodiversity Framework,” said Joji Carino, member of the IIFB, speaking in Nairobi.
“Governments can no longer treat biodiversity and humans as separate if we are to really reach an agreement [at COP15 in Montreal]. We are so closely interrelated,” said Carino.

Also speaking in a press conference in Nairobi last week, Jennifer Corpuz said "It’s really frustrating that the urgency is not there. We are spending hours talking about what is the right word to use, what is the right punctuation to use, while people in Loliondo [Tanzania] get killed.”

Much is needed to strengthen the importance of human rights, and we should not backpedal on the progress that we have made so far. The case of our Maasai brothers and sisters in Loliondo, is one of many situations faced by IPLCs, reflecting how imperative it is to put human rights at the centre of the GBF and its implementation.

“How can we debate whether to use 'seas' or 'oceans' when people are getting killed in the name of conservation?” said Corpuz.

“The land and territories of Indigenous peoples are key in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity,” said Ramiro Batzin, Co-Chair of the IIFB.

“Because of this, there is a need to recognize our rights. We strongly urge Parties to lift the brackets from the text proposed by indigenous peoples and local communities,” he said.

In their statement, the IIFB also underscored the crucial need for resource mobilisation for IPLCs to ensure their ability to contribute to the implementation of the GBF. The IIFB called for an open, fair and equitable mechanism of direct access to funding that ensures these resources actually directly reach the IPLCs in both developed and developing countries.”

The IIFB concluded their statement by saying they look forward to working with all the stakeholders to increase national ambitions and the full implementation of the 2050 biodiversity strategy, but urged Parties to fully embed Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities as vital actors and partners in the Goals, Targets and Sections of the post-2020 GBF.

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Further information

For information on event and for interviews with member of the IPLC Caucus, please contact:

● Alice Mathew (ecila.mathew@gmail.com)
● Winnie Kodi (kodiwinnie@gmail.com)
● Tom Dixon (tdixon@forestpeoples.org)
● Web: https://iifb-indigenous.org/
IIFB members available for comment / interview:

- **Ramiro Batzin**, International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) & Sotzil (Guatemala)
- **Lucy Mulenkei**, IIFB & IWBN, Indigenous Information Network (Kenya)
- **Joji Carino**, IIFB & Forest Peoples Programme (Philippines)
- **Jennifer Tauli Corpuz**, IIFB & Nia Tero (Philippines)
- **Áslak Holmberg**, IIFB & Saami Council (Finland)
- **Ruth V. Spencer**, IIFB & Barnes Hill Community Development Organization (BHCDO), (Antigua and Barbuda)
- **Joseph Itongwa**, IIFB & ANAPAC (DRC)
- **Daniel Kobei**, IIFB & OGIEK Peoples’ Development Program (OPDP)
- **Ndiaga Sall**, IIFB & Enda Santé (Senegal)
- **Viviana Figueroa**, IIFB & Red de Mujeres Indígenas sobre Biodiversidad LAC region
- **Faith Nataya**, IIFB & African Indigenous Women Organization (Kenya)
- **Abigail Kitma**, IIFB & Tebtebba (Philippines)
- **Ramson Karmushu**, IIFB & IMPACT (Kenya)
- **Rodrigo De la Cruz**, IIFB & Parlamento Andino (Ecuador)
- **Tabea Casique Coronado**, IIFB & AIDESEP/COICA (Peru Amazonia)
- **Gladman Chibememe**, IIFB & Chibememe Earth Healing Association (Zimbabwe)