

**International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) at Convention on Biological Diversity
11th Conference of the Parties, Hyderabad, India
8th-19th October 2012
Opening Statement**

Distinguished Chairperson,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to present this statement on behalf of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB).

We also extend our sincere thanks to the Government of India and the city of Hyderabad for hosting this COP-11 and for the warm welcome our team has received since our arrival for this COP. The preparations for this conference by the government of India have been quite excellent.

We are indeed grateful for the CBD Voluntary Fund and the governments of Sweden, Norway, India, and the Christensen Fund for their generous donations and support which has enabled the participation of over a hundred Indigenous peoples' and local communities' delegates in this conference.

We also pay respects to the Adivasis and other tribal peoples in India, who, comprise one of the largest populations of indigenous peoples and local communities in the world. We stand in solidarity with them in our common struggles against displacement by modern economic development.

Mr. Chairperson, members of the IIFB have been meeting in the past two days to take a critical look at the various decisions and initiatives undertaken for the implementation of the Convention since COP 10. Whilst the forum has seen improvements in some areas and processes, it is also true that serious challenges remain for example the establishment of protected areas continue to impact ongoing indigenous conservation practices and livelihoods. The renewed emphasis on economic growth in the wake of the global economic crisis and as well as government responses to the climate change crisis have affected Indigenous peoples and local communities in far greater and disproportionate dimensions.

We express our deep concern about the negotiation process on our Mother Earth, who is a living and sacred Mother from the point of view of indigenous peoples and decisions affecting her must involve the peoples living and caring for her.

We believe that our physical, cultural and spiritual continuity as indigenous peoples depends on our lands, territories, freshwater waters and marine and coastal seas and other resources.

We recognize the vital role that indigenous peoples and local communities play, including women, in the transmission of traditional knowledge, customary use and management of biodiversity, as well as the recovery and continuity of our cultures and ancestral territories.

In recognition of the above, Mr. Chairperson, the IIFB will in the coming two weeks present specific recommendations to the Parties on the various agenda items, but we offer some general comments.

Five years ago, the United Nations General Assembly passed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which sets the minimum benchmarks for the recognition of Indigenous peoples and their effective participation in decision making processes. We note with regret that most states in the implementation of decisions under the Convention on Biological Diversity have failed to mainstream the rights inherent in the declaration in their decisions relating to biodiversity in respect of conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use and equitable access and benefit sharing arrangements.

The issue of the full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples and local communities recognized as essential in the attainment of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity particularly in relation to conservation, sustainable use and the equitable access and benefit sharing processes.

We are deeply concerned that most of the COP decisions on ensuring the full and effective participation or involvement of Indigenous peoples and local communities have not been dutifully followed by state parties. We urge parties to implement these decisions in good faith to ensure greater conservation of biodiversity.

On a final note, we appeal to state parties to make more contributions to the CBD Voluntary Fund to enable it to fulfill its mandate of supporting Indigenous peoples and local communities participation in CBD processes. We also call for consideration of indigenous peoples and local communities from developed countries that are presently being excluded from access to resources for increased funding to also enable their effective participation in CBD processes.

We note with appreciation the development of a new work plan on Article 10c, which will assist Parties to take more effective measures to support and promote our customary sustainable use of biodiversity. We hope that the bracketed targets in the indicative list that deal with recognition of land and resource and tenure rights and customary laws and traditional institutions – which are crucial issues- can be resolved by this COP and we look forward to providing out continued input and suggestions on this matter.

Chairperson, as we gather here today to look at how far we have fared since COP 10, we reiterate our passionate appeal to state parties to set work with us to ensure that COP 11 makes the difference for which we have all toiled and worked in the last two years. **BETTER GOVERNANCE MEANS BETTER DECISIONS FOR PLANET AND PEOPLE.**

Thank you.