



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
OF THE  
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
CRISTIANA PAȘCA PALMER**

**on the occasion of the  
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES  
9 August 2017**

*“Ten years of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”*

The ten-year anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples presents a fitting opportunity to draw attention to the significant contribution of indigenous peoples to the conservation and sustainable use of the world's biodiversity.

Over millennia, indigenous peoples have developed lifestyles and cultures intricately tied to nature. Their cultural and traditional spiritual beliefs have evolved to enable them to respect and live in harmony with nature, conserving the diversity of life upon which they depend. Thus the concept of the sustainable use of biodiversity, one of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, is inherent in the value systems of indigenous and traditional societies.

While indigenous peoples constitute a relatively small portion of the global population – it is estimated that 370 million of the world's 7.5 billion people are indigenous peoples - they represent the largest portion of linguistic and cultural diversity on Earth. Also, the lands and waters traditionally occupied or used by Indigenous peoples overwhelmingly contain the greatest remaining reserves of biodiversity. The traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities can play a key role in addressing some of the main challenges - including climate change, biodiversity loss and sustainable development - currently facing humanity.

The contribution of indigenous peoples and local communities to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, however, goes far beyond their role as stewards of biodiversity and custodians of local ecosystems. Their skills and techniques provide valuable information to the global community and a useful model for biodiversity policies.

With this in mind, traditional knowledge, customary sustainable use of biodiversity and the participation of indigenous peoples is integrated into the Convention's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, as demonstrated in Target 18, which provides that, by 2020, the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and their customary use of biological resources, are respected, subject to national legislation and relevant international obligations, and fully integrated and reflected in the implementation of the Convention with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, at all relevant levels.



**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**

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Indigenous peoples have been faithful partners to the Convention since its inception in 1992. With the Convention entering a critical phase in considering progress towards the Strategic Plan, its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets and developing a post-2020 agenda, the effective participation of indigenous peoples remains central for assessing progress on the ground, and for developing new enhanced arrangements to save and preserve the global diversity of plants and animals for future generations.

In order to ensure indigenous peoples effectively participate in all matters of direct relevance to them, indigenous peoples have enhanced participation mechanisms under the Convention, including a voluntary fund for the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in meetings held under the Convention. Indigenous representatives interested in participating in meetings held under the Convention are invited to consult the calendar of meetings at [www.cbd.int/meetings/](http://www.cbd.int/meetings/) and to complete an application form at [www.cbd.int/traditional/fund.shtml](http://www.cbd.int/traditional/fund.shtml). Please submit the completed application along with an official letter of nomination at least three months before the meetings you are applying for to [secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int).

I look forward to continuing our work together and I wish all indigenous peoples of the world a memorable celebration.

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