



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
DR. CRISTIANA PAȘCA PALMER  
on the occasion of the  
International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples  
Theme: Indigenous Peoples: Migration and Movement  
9 August 2018**

On this International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, I take this opportunity to recognize the World's indigenous peoples as resilient sustainable societies steeped in an enduring knowledge that remains as relevant today as it has ever been.

Indigenous peoples through their traditional knowledge maintain strong links with their territories and biodiversity. Nevertheless, indigenous communities are not static: migration and movement are part of their everyday realities. For some, cyclical and seasonal migration has formed part of their livelihood for millennia. Some indigenous peoples, such as the Maasai of Tanzania and Kenya and the Saami of Scandinavia, have adopted semi-nomadic lifestyles, based on constant seasonal movement, as sustainable resources management practices. Indigenous peoples across Central Asian practice vertical seasonal movements from valleys to high mountain plateaus, grazing their unique animal breeds and shaping the biodiversity surrounding them. Transhumance has allowed them to maintain sustainable interactions with local ecosystems over millennia and foster the biodiversity of those land and waterscapes.

For others migration represents a relatively new phenomenon, driven by loss of traditional territories, resources, extreme climatic events or deforestation and in search of economic opportunities, many indigenous men migrate, leaving women often in vulnerable situations, to raise families alone and maintain their connections to their cultures, knowledge systems and territories.

The short and long-term effects of forced evictions on indigenous families and communities are severe. Many indigenous peoples suffer spiritually, physically and economically from the dislocation from their homelands. Forced migration to urban areas destroys their ability to be economically self-sufficient, in the process lowering their living standards, causing social and health problems, and eroding tradition knowledge and culture. Forced evictions particularly affect indigenous women, who play a central role in ensuring family well-being and who, because of their social and economic conditions generally, bear the brunt of the eviction. Additionally, the establishment of protected areas without their participation or consent has and continues in many regions to play an important role in the forced removal of indigenous peoples.

Many move to cities and towns, where the lack of recognition of their skills and knowledge, coupled with discrimination, often leave indigenous migrants in a precarious socioeconomic situation. Feeling disconnected from their homeland can also threaten their sense of identity and well-being and impede the transmission of vital traditional ecological knowledge.

At the same time, indigenous peoples moving to cities bring with them unique ways of knowing, planning and problem-solving and their social inclusion can bring position creative solutions to their new urban environments. For many indigenous individuals, migration represents an opportunity to cope with socioeconomic and environmental changes.

The Convention on Biodiversity promotes respect for the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and their effective participation in all matters that directly affect them. The Convention also works for greener Cities and for the social inclusion of indigenous peoples building on their unique world views and promoting cultural and natural solutions – Nature and Cultures for sustainable futures.

Additionally, the Convention's work of protected areas advocates for equitable governance models and the recognition of indigenous protected areas and community conservation areas, as well as the recognition of sacred sites.

Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge and their cultural diversity gives them a great resilience which has seen them endure since time immemorial as they walk to the future in the footsteps of their ancestors.

-----