



## **Report of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**

Submitted to the 11th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
(UNPFII)

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### **Executive Summary:**

UNEP is the principal UN body in the field of the environment and assists governments to address global, regional and national environmental challenges. UNEP keeps the environment under review, provides scientific information to stakeholders and governments and promotes regional and global collaboration to address these challenges. UNEP is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012 and plays a key role in the Rio + 20 preparatory process, focusing in particular on Green Economy in the Context of Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development and the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development. This year's report to the UNPFII provides an overview of UNEP's most relevant projects and programmes in relation to Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Peoples' issues. Issues and themes which were addressed in previous reports are not addressed, as requested by the Secretariat. However, updates are being provided when relevant.

A strong focus on Indigenous Peoples can be found in the work of UNEP/GRID Arendal through its Polar Center, addressing in particular "Nomadic Herders: Enhancing the Resilience of Pastoral Ecosystems and Livelihoods." UNEP also continues to provide support to UN Joint Programme initiatives in the Latin-American and Caribbean region.

UNEP recognizes that there is an important role for Major Groups and Stakeholders to participate in policy formulation, advocacy and lobbying, as well as in the development and the implementation of UNEP's Programme of Work and relevant assessment platforms such as the production of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO 5) and the Inter-governmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) that have successfully provided for Indigenous Peoples an opportunity to be included in the processes. UNEP aims at enhancing its engagement with Indigenous Peoples and is currently finalising an Indigenous Peoples Policy Guidance document.

## **Overview of recent activities and projects within UNEP as they relate to indigenous peoples and indigenous peoples issues:**

**1. The Nomadic Herders project** aims at assessing the impacts of land-use change and climate change on reindeer and yak herders and on their adaptation options and opportunities, focusing on taiga reindeer and yak herding in Mongolia.

During 2011, UNEP/GRID-Arendal, together with the Association of World Reindeer Herders, the International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry, the Mongolian Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism and the Taiga Nature Society (Mongolian NGO) organised a community-based workshop in Tsagaannuur, the reindeer herding district in northern Mongolia. Participants included reindeer herders from Mongolia, Russia and Fennoscandia, scientists, and local and national authorities. The purpose of the workshop and the following field trip was to discuss herders' and other stakeholders' notion of land use change and climate change on the pastureland as well as to solicit their recommendations on how to deal with the challenges met by reindeer husbandry in Mongolia.

The workshop and visit to the reindeer herding camps provided input for a report of reindeer husbandry in Mongolia "Changing Taiga: Challenges to Mongolian Reindeer Husbandry". The report includes a set of recommendations targeting the herders themselves, scientist and policy-makers. Based on findings and discussions with herders, a joint UNEP/ Mongolian/Russian Global Environment Facility (GEF) proposal was developed and submitted late 2011. The Nomadic Herders initiative has further provided input to a report on pastoralism and land use change to the 2012 session of the UNPFII. Furthermore, the project is featured in the Ecosystem-Based Adaptation Calendar 2012 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) ([http://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/application/pdf/nwp\\_cal\\_2012.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/application/pdf/nwp_cal_2012.pdf), see cover and December pages) and is also presented in the UNFCCC's database on ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation ([http://unfccc.int/adaptation/nairobi\\_work\\_programme/knowledge\\_resources\\_and\\_publications/items/6227.php](http://unfccc.int/adaptation/nairobi_work_programme/knowledge_resources_and_publications/items/6227.php)) as well as in the report of Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation (<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2011/sbsta/eng/inf08.pdf>).

The Nomadic Herders initiative has developed a webpage and produced outreach material targeting the policy-makers and ministries of environment: [www.nomadicherders.org](http://www.nomadicherders.org).

The Nomadic Herders initiative was planned and is implemented jointly with the reindeer herders in Mongolia. As the reindeer husbandry in Mongolia is a family based livelihood with gender specific responsibilities, the project has engaged both, women and men through workshops, mapping exercises, interviews and discussions. As a way of ensuring capacity building and ensuring a legacy of the initiative, reindeer herder youth from Mongolia, Russia and Fennoscandia are also engaged through the project activities and get the opportunity to visit and exchange their knowledge and experiences with other herding communities. Hence, two young herders from Mongolia attended a seminar on traditional knowledge in Kautokeino in March 2011, and three young herders from Norway and Sweden were part of the delegation that visited Mongolia in June 2011.

**2. Many Strong Voices (MSV- [www.manystrongvoices.com](http://www.manystrongvoices.com))**, a UNEP GRID-Arendal project, brings together the peoples of the Arctic and Small Island Developing States to meet the challenges of climate change. MSV was granted observer status to the IPCC at its 33rd Plenary Session in May 2011. As an observer, MSV can nominate authors for IPCC reports, provide comments to IPCC reports, and attend sessions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and its Working Groups. A main goal for MSV in becoming an observer is to support the inclusion of indigenous knowledge from the Arctic, Small Island Developing States and other regions into the Fifth Assessment Report to be released in 2014.

MSV continued its outreach and lobbying efforts on climate change at the UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP) 17 in Durban, South Africa working with partners such as the Caribbean Community Climate Change Center, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, and the Nanisiniq Arviat History Project.

A new exhibition of the “Portraits of Resilience” youth photography project featured work by young people from indigenous communities in the Arctic and several South Pacific countries, including Fiji, Kiribati and Tuvalu. It was displayed at the Fiji Museum of Natural History in August 2011 and opened at the Durban Natural History Museum Research Centre during COP 17 (<http://www.grida.no/polar/blog.aspx?id=5000>). The exhibit, officially opened on 29 November 2011, will remain on display until April 2012. Portraits will also be shown at the Smithsonian Institution during the Inuit Studies Conference in October 2012.

Among other research efforts, MSV launched a new project called "Moving the most vulnerable: Climate change, human rights and forced relocation in the Arctic and Small Island Developing States" at the Seventh International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences held on 22-26 June 2011 in Akureyri, Iceland. In 2012, community workshops will be held in Alaska and Papua New Guinea, to develop guidelines for discussions about climate induced relocation.

3. UNEP has launched a **Policy Series on Ecosystem Management**. [www.unep.org/policyseries](http://www.unep.org/policyseries); <http://www.unep.org/ecosystemmanagement/> and its issue No. 7: “*Putting Ecosystem Management in the Vision of Africa’s Development: Towards a sustainable Green Economy*” demonstrates the foundational significance of ecosystems for human well-being in the African region. It highlights some of the key policy challenges and opportunities in ecosystem management and makes recommendations for enhancing the capacity of policy makers in the region.

Of particular interest on the way to Rio + 20 and beyond is the issue No. 6 of the Policy Series which demonstrates the key role that Ecosystem Management has in underpinning the Green Economy. It illustrates the advantages of this approach and makes proposals on actions to be taken during the transition period.

4. UNEP’s Governing Council already adopted in 2010 the “ **Guidelines for the Development of National Legislation on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters**” and is currently developing a project that will raise awareness and capacity of countries on the Guidelines and assist them in implementation at the national level. For further information please visit: [http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/59/Documents/Resources/GUIDELINES\\_TO\\_ACCESS\\_TO\\_ENV\\_INFO\\_2.pdf](http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/59/Documents/Resources/GUIDELINES_TO_ACCESS_TO_ENV_INFO_2.pdf)

5. In order to ensure that the voices of Civil Society are better heard in the on-going discussions on environment and sustainable development, UNEP has launched a new publication series called “**Perspectives**”. This series presents views from Major Groups and Stakeholders of Civil Society on global environmental issues and themes that are relevant and important for the discussion on environment and sustainable development. During 2012 “Perspectives” will focus primarily on topics related to Rio + 20 and its follow up. Major Groups and Stakeholders of Civil Society are the main authors of the series.

More information under: <http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Publications/NewPublicationSeriesfromUNEP/PERSPECTIVES/tabid/101113/Default.aspx>. One of the upcoming issues will address “The Green Economy Concept and Indigenous Peoples”.

6. As recommended through the 2011 UN PFII report (E/2011/43E/C.19/2011/14) and in particular as stated and recommended in paragraph 135, UNEP has supported the preparations of Indigenous Peoples towards Rio+20 and was able to provide an expert to the meeting "Indigenous Peoples in route to the Rio +20 Conference - Global Preparatory Meeting of Indigenous Peoples on Rio +20 and Karioca 2 - August 22 - 24, 2011 - Manaus, Brazil" and to introduce the Green Economy concept. Furthermore, UNEP has financially supported the **African Indigenous Peoples Workshop on Green Economy**. A workshop report: “The Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC) and Natural Justice: African Indigenous Peoples and the UNEP Green Economy Initiative: A Report\* on Green Economy, Equity & Green Governance” can be found under:

[http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/59/Documents/publications/UNEP\\_GEI.pdf](http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/59/Documents/publications/UNEP_GEI.pdf)

7. Because of the particular interest and importance to Indigenous Peoples - due to their direct reliance on traditional diets, in particular in the North and the Arctic - in the following an update on treaty and convention developments regarding hazardous waste including heavy metals and POP's:

**Basel Convention COP10:**– Representatives of the Parties to the Basel Convention, the global treaty on hazardous waste management, have reached a historic agreement unblocking an amendment that will ban the export of hazardous wastes from member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to non-OECD countries, known as the Ban Amendment. The ground-breaking decision, containing a set of measures aimed at strengthening international control of trans-boundary movements of hazardous wastes, was adopted on 21 October 2011 in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. Technical Guidelines were adopted on co-processing of hazardous wastes in cement kilns, environmentally sound management of mercury wastes, and environmentally sound management of used tyres, and parties took over 20 additional substantive decisions on other matters. The Parties also adopted the Cartagena Declaration on Prevention and Minimization of Hazardous Wastes.

More information on COP10 under: [www.basel.int/COP10/tabid/1571/Default.aspx](http://www.basel.int/COP10/tabid/1571/Default.aspx) and <http://www.iisd.ca/basel/cop10/>

UNEP has taken the global lead in facilitating a **global treaty on mercury**. In 2011 two intergovernmental and several regional meetings took place in Nairobi, Kenya to negotiate a

global legally binding instrument on mercury. It is planned that the UNEP-brokered treaty will be adopted in Japan in 2013:

<http://www.unep.org/hazardoussubstances/Mercury/GlobalMercuryPartnership/tabid/1253/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

Between 2009 and 2011, UNEP assisted 32 countries with training and capacity-building in monitoring Persistent Organic Pollutants (**POPs**). 20 training courses were held at POPs laboratories in developing countries. In cooperation with the World Health Organisation (WHO), mothers' milk samples from 55 countries showed which nations have most exposure to certain POPs. DDT, for example, was highest in Tajikistan and the Solomon Islands. An interesting source of dioxin exposure was identified in some African countries where traditionally, pregnant women eat certain types of clay to overcome nausea: this resulted in concentrations higher than normally found in Africa.

8. A major new independent scientific assessment, carried out by UNEP, showed that pollution from over 50 years of oil operations in the **Ogoni Delta in Nigeria** has penetrated further and deeper than expected. Over a 14-month period, a UNEP team examined more than 200 locations, surveyed 122 kilometres of pipeline rights, reviewed more than 5,000 medical records and engaged over 23,000 people at local community meetings. Some areas, which appear unaffected at the surface, are severely contaminated underground and action to protect human health and reduce the risks to affected communities should occur without delay. It is important to point out that UNEP's achievement would not have been possible without the local knowledge and cooperation of the Ogoni people: <http://www.unep.org/nigeria/>

9. **The Global Environment Outlook (GEO)** is UNEP's flagship assessment process which helps to keep the global environment under review. GEO is a tool that informs decision-making, focusing on assessment priorities and analysing policy challenges and opportunities. It is also a capacity building tool, bringing together diverse stakeholder groups, including Indigenous Peoples. UNEP is currently finalising the **GEO-5**, which will differ from previous GEO reports by shifting from assessing priority "problems" to include assessments of priority solutions. The GEO-5 report will consist of three major parts: an assessment of the state and trends of the global environment; regional policy analyses; and potential opportunities for action at the global level. The report will be launched on 6 June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro on the eve of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). <http://www.unep.org/geo/> and [http://www.unep.org/geo/GEO5\\_SPM.asp](http://www.unep.org/geo/GEO5_SPM.asp).

"GEO for Youth" is currently being finalised as a supplement to GEO 5. It will take a particular look at how youth can address biodiversity loss and adopt more sustainable lifestyles and educate local communities, including indigenous communities.

#### 10. **Indigenous Issues in the Inter-governmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)**

In June 2010, in Busan, Republic of Korea, governments agreed to establish IPBES as a global mechanism recognised by both, the scientific and policy communities that will gather, analyze

and synthesise information for decision-making in the field of biodiversity and ecosystem services, in order to effectively address the challenges of biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystem services and their impact on human well-being.

IPBES will focus on four areas of work: knowledge generation, assessments of knowledge, support to policy formulation and capacity building.

IPBES will therefore be of interest to the wide range of stakeholders involved in the fields of biodiversity conservation, natural resources management and development, at all levels. It has already been decided that IPBES will recognize and respect the contribution of indigenous and local knowledge to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and will encourage and take into account, as appropriate, inputs and suggestions made by relevant stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities. IPBES is currently being operationalized through an intergovernmental and multistakeholder process, and details of the modalities for participation of stakeholders and processes for integrating different types of knowledge in the work of IPBES will be available in due course from the IPBES website [www.ipbes.net](http://www.ipbes.net). Additional stakeholder perspectives on the process are also available at: [www.ipbes.net/ipbes-stakeholders/your-views](http://www.ipbes.net/ipbes-stakeholders/your-views)

At a meeting held in Panama City in April 2012, IPBES was officially established and Germany won the bid to host the secretariat of the new body. UNEP will continue to act as Secretariat until the first official session of IPBES which will decide on rules of procedure. The recently adopted resolution makes references also to Indigenous Peoples who can participate as observers in the Platform subject to the rules of procedure. Please see for more details: <http://www.ipbes.net/>

### **11. Mount Kailash Sacred Landscape Initiative (<http://www.icimod.org/?q=1856> ).**

This region represents a sacred cultural and religious transboundary landscape with significance to Hindu, Buddhist, Bon Po, Jain, Sikh and other related religious traditions, attracting thousands of pilgrims every year. This landscape comprises the source of four of Asia's great rivers which provide essential trans-boundary ecosystem goods and services, vitally important within the greater Hindu Kush-Himalayan region, and beyond.

The Kailash Sacred Landscape Conservation Initiative (KSLCI) is intended to be a long-term conservation effort based on regional trans-boundary cooperation and ecosystem management approaches, and was designed applying a participatory approach. The KSLCI is a joint initiative implemented by major strategic partners in China, India and Nepal, and was facilitated and supported by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) which is a regional inter-governmental learning and knowledge sharing center serving 8 regional member countries of the Hindu Kush Himalayas – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan – and is based in Kathmandu, Nepal as well as UNEP, with additional support provided by the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ).

### **12. Latin America and the Caribbean- relevant initiatives and projects**

a. UNEP developed **environmental legislation related material in indigenous languages**, and climate change information material in local languages in the context of the MDG-Fund of the Joint Programme Peru ([http://www.pnuma.org/peru/Materiales\\_Publicaciones.php](http://www.pnuma.org/peru/Materiales_Publicaciones.php)).

**b. Integrated and adaptive management of environmental resources and climatic risks in High Andean micro-watersheds.** Adaptation, planning, financing and cost-effective preventive actions are increasingly incorporated into national development processes that are supported by scientific information, integrated climate impact assessments and local climate data. UNEP's activity in the framework of this joint program (together with the United Nations Development Programme/UNDP, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations/FAO, the Pan American Health Organisation/PAHO/WHO) is to raise awareness of the families, authorities and community leaders about the potential impacts of climate change for High Andean communities and to promote adaptation and mitigation. The locations are Cusco and Apurimac in Peru. The project promotes the participation of leading indigenous authorities making use of radio programmes as a tool to address families and to invoke the protection of natural resources, thinking about future scenarios of climate change.

The members of the Network of Rural Communities were trained in workshops on climate change and possible adaptation measures. Communities then started to run radio programmes in five different radio stations that can reach at least 7,000 families in the Sub Basin of Santo Tomas, mostly, indigenous populations.

**c. A series of workshops for local and indigenous communities on tourism and biodiversity on new technologies for web-based information** was organized by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in collaboration with the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC). The objective of the workshops was to provide the opportunity to build and strengthen the capacity of representatives of indigenous and local communities and their tour operators, to use modern information and communication technologies that will enable them to improve the presentation of their products and services and in turn raise visitors' awareness about conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

**d. Integrated coastal management with special emphasis on the sustainable management of mangrove forests in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.** This project was implemented through a Joint Programme and with the participation of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment of Spain and the Ministries of Environment and Natural Resources of Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

The project applies the UN ecosystems approach in order to develop activities that can contribute to the sustainable management of mangroves. It has three components: a research component (mainly revolving around an economic valuation of mangrove ecosystem services), a community livelihood project component and capacity building activities.

The project is operational in the Moskitia, a shared ecosystem between Honduras and Nicaragua, where populations are predominantly indigenous. The main beneficiaries of the project are the Miskito, Rama, Garifuna (to a larger extent), Sumo, Lenca, Pechs and Tawahka (to a smaller extent) populations. In Nicaragua, the project focal point is the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA), as well as the autonomous governments of the Southern and Northern Regional Autonomous Atlantic Regions (RAAN and RAAS). The project has a stakeholder committee that plays an advisory role in each country. Indigenous community members are part of the committee.

#### **e. ANDEAN PARAMOS: Conservation of the Biodiversity of the Paramo in the Northern and Central Andes**

The main project objective is to protect and manage the biodiversity of the Paramo ecosystem by supporting the communities that live there or those who are the legitimate owners as in the case of the Indigenous Reserves of Colombia. The participating countries (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela) are supported to overcome the major barriers for conserving the biodiversity and safeguarding the hydrological and other environmental services and functions of the Andean Paramo.

Main activities of the project:

- Implement a sustainable development pilot model that shows best practices coherent with the fragility of these ecosystems, protects the biodiversity, including food, improves the living conditions of its inhabitants, and can be used as an example for neighbouring communities and for other countries participating in the project.
- Strengthen government and non-governmental institutions, at all levels, as partners in the project to adopt and disseminate policies and ethical and behaviour principles oriented toward the conservation and management of the Paramo.
- Strengthen the scientific and technical capacity of the inhabitants of the Paramo, experts, community leaders, and government and non-governmental institutions, in order to produce food, improve the quality of life of the communities and protect, conserve, and manage the Paramo.
- Promote awareness based on education, training, and communication of the communities that live in the project's areas, the urban communities who receive environmental services from the Paramo and the leading political classes so that they can incorporate the conservation and management of the Paramo into national policies.
- Generate strategies to replicate the outcomes obtained in the project's successful practices, especially with regard to the experiences and lessons learned in the demonstrative pilot model resulting from component one.

The project is implemented in nine critical Paramo sites at Andean level (two trans-boundary sites). Indigenous peoples from project pilot sites communities of the Andean highlands in the four participating countries are involved in the project for nearly six years, harmonizing sustainable livelihoods with biodiversity and ecosystem conservation through the application of a comprehensive multi-component approach. Additional information is available on [www.condesan.org/ppa](http://www.condesan.org/ppa) and [www.paramo.org](http://www.paramo.org)

### **13. Indigenous Peoples and West Asia:**

UNEP's Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA) is supporting the integration of indigenous and local communities in the NBSAP (National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans) updated according to the Aichi Biodiversity Strategy for the years 2011-2020. Regional workshops in West Asia related to biodiversity activities foster the participation of indigenous groups to restore the rights of indigenous peoples in the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and particularly promoting the ratification of the Nagoya Protocol adopted in 2010. Jordan has prioritized indigenous knowledge, being the first country in the Arab region and the second worldwide to have ratified the Nagoya Protocol in January 2012. In

Bahrain a biodiversity stakeholder meeting took place in November 2011 and the stakeholders included local Bahraini groups and members from the municipal council to participate in determining the national biodiversity targets for 2011-2020.

#### **14. Current and planned UNEP Activities in the Arctic**

UNEP is completing a project in the Arctic in collaboration with GRID Arendal which will involve Indigenous Peoples. Changes occurring in the Arctic are disrupting local peoples' natural food supply and other systems that sustain them. Arctic countries governments are seeking to improve their northern citizens' livelihoods and preserve their cultures, languages and traditional knowledge. The project is designed to determine how and where UNEP might best serve governments and other stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples, to identify and address environmental and environmentally-related issues in the Arctic region and linkages between Arctic and global issues. To this end, UNEP has consulted with Arctic country governments, key multilateral entities such as the Arctic Council, civil society and the private sector to develop "institutional arrangements for the governance of shared natural resources and trans-boundary environmental issues" related to the Arctic region and identify areas of activity that UNEP might constructively engage in to assist in addressing Arctic matters.

15. UNEP is in the process of finalising a **strategic guiding document for UNEP's engagement with Indigenous Peoples**. UNEP is committed to engage Indigenous Peoples, their communities and their traditional authorities as well as organizations proactively in the Major Groups and Stakeholders meetings as well as the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum sessions themselves.

#### **Focal points on indigenous issues:**

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