

An IUCN Indigenous Peoples Self-Determined Strategy: Supporting effective participation of indigenous peoples in IUCN and conservation

Summary

At the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2016, the IUCN Members Assembly adopted a landmark decision for indigenous peoples and conservation. Members voted to create a new category of IUCN membership for Indigenous Peoples' Organisations (IPO), strengthening the recognition of their rights, participation, voice and role in IUCN. The new category was the first time IUCN reformed its membership structure in its 70-year history and it did so specifically to recognize the specific situation and role of IPOs.

IUCN has a long history of working with indigenous peoples both to promote recognition of their rights at policy level and to engage and support indigenous peoples in conservation activities on the ground. However, this change in IUCN's governance structure now allows IUCN to play an important convening and facilitating role for indigenous participation in environmental decision-making.

As a distinct and mobilised constituency within IUCN, IPO Members met as a group for the first time in 2018. At this meeting, the IPO's developed a self-determined strategy identifying joint priorities for advancing indigenous rights and issues in conservation and within IUCN. These priorities focus particularly on leveraging IUCN's convening power, knowledge generation, standard setting and policy engagement in regard to indigenous issues.

The strategy provides IPOs, in partnership with other constituencies of IUCN, with a basis to support and advance indigenous rights, needs and priorities in conservation. Much of the programme of work proposed will be undertaken in alignment with existing policy processes such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Although each IPO faces different regional, political and ecological challenges, they highlighted the following joint priorities, each with associated actions.

Increase indigenous participation in IUCN's governance and strengthen IPO constituency voice

The IPO strategy includes ensuring indigenous representation in IUCN's Council,¹ IPO participation in IUCN National and Regional Committees, and increased indigenous engagement with IUCN Commissions and Programmes. It highlights the need for indigenous peoples' participation on Commission steering committees and direct engagement, as experts and project partners, with IUCN Commissions and Programs. The strategy also prioritizes outreach to increase IPO membership in IUCN. In order to decrease financial or other barriers to membership for IPOs, IPOs are working with CEESP and the Secretariat to propose amendments to membership dues and criteria for IPOs so these requirements take into account the diversity in financial capacity, governance and structures of IPOs. In order to support these institutional changes and coordinate on other areas for collective action, IPOs are drafting internal bylaws and have established regional focal points.

Actively participate in IUCN's global policy engagement

IUCN participates in multilateral processes and international environmental forums to provide policy and technical advice to key stakeholders, drawing on extensive on-the-ground experience and scientific expertise. The voice of IPO Members and promotion of indigenous rights in these arenas are critical to advancing global recognition and action on securing indigenous rights in sustainable development and conservation efforts. IPOs

¹ The IUCN Council is the principal governing body of IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, in between sessions of the World Conservation Congress - the general assembly of the Union's members. Subject to the authority, direction and policy of the IUCN World Conservation Congress, the role of the IUCN Council is to set strategic direction and policy guidance for the work of the Union; provide oversight and guidance on the performance of the components of the Union as a whole and of the Director General in particular; fulfill its fiduciary responsibilities to the Members of the Union and render account to them; and support the Director General in communicating IUCN's objectives, policy and Programme to the world community.

identified the need to ensure that IUCN has a clear overarching policy, taking account of IUCN Resolutions addressing indigenous issues and the existing ESMS Standard on Indigenous Peoples, so as to base any policy interventions on a clear IUCN position. The IPO strategy also includes a focus on including IPO's in IUCN delegations, capacity building in advocating indigenous rights at a global policy level and facilitating exchanges between IPOs on relevant advances and challenges in the global policy arena.

Rights in relation to lands and territories, natural and cultural resources

The strategy outlines the need for increased recognition of indigenous rights to lands, territories and resources. IPO's identified stakeholder dialogues, case studies and building the evidence base of the overlaps - and values of – indigenous collective management areas and protected areas through maps and other studies. The IPO strategy also highlights the need to develop systems of indigenous protected areas to better reflect the diversity and benefits of indigenous management, safeguard indigenous access and use of natural resources and enable their continued conservation of lands and resources – based on indigenous rights as laid out in ILO Convention 169 and UNDRIP. The strategy also considers capacity building and development of guidance for IPOs, local communities and States for effective and improved governance of lands, territories and protected areas.

Cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge

The strategy includes actions towards increasing IPO engagement with the International Indigenous Advisory Group on World Heritage and work towards establishing clear guidelines and protocols for indigenous peoples engagement within the World Heritage nomination processes. This includes monitoring how indigenous knowledge and indigenous rights are being respected and advanced within World Heritage processes. Additionally, IPOs plan to build the evidence base around the benefits of traditional agricultural practices for biodiversity, livelihoods, health and climate change mitigation. The strategy also includes identification of key areas where indigenous knowledge can be integrated in to global level processes including UNFCCC, WIPO and the CBD and the development of a series of case studies on the value of indigenous knowledge in addressing environmental issues.

Institutional strengthening of indigenous organisations

IPOs identified a need to strengthen IP institutions and build capacities to collectively act in implementing this strategy and effectively influence conservation policy and practice. The strategy envisions a series of courses to build skills in, *inter alia*, administration, communication platforms (for knowledge exchange and coordination), accountability, fundraising and engagement in global policy processes and negotiations. The strategy also highlights women's and youth engagement and actions to ensure that they are included in capacity building initiatives. A specific area for capacity building and support focuses on measures to enable IPO access to funds from international financing mechanisms such as the GEF and GCF. For example, this could include their certification as Executing Agencies for the GEF and/or GCF.

The strategy is a working document to be added to or adapted over time by IUCN's IPOs. The development and implementation process is led by IPOs and supported by IUCN's Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP) and the IUCN Global Programme on Governance and Rights (GPGR).