CONSERVATION & HUMAN RIGHTS

BUILDING TOGETHER FOR NATURE AND PLANET: A COMMON AGENDA FOR EQUITABLE, JUST, AND DURABLE CONSERVATION

BRONX ZOO, 11-12 APRIL 2024

Image: Bunong Indigenous Peoples in Keo Siema Wildlife Sanctuary, Cambodia. © Filip Agoo & Everland

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Image: Jarawa Tribal Reserve-natural coastline of the Andaman Islands with the Jarawa. Credit: Manish Chandi

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) organized a second convening on Conservation and Human Rights which brought together stakeholders from local communities, Indigenous Peoples, funding organizations, and the conservation and human rights sectors (please see concept and agenda in Annex 1 and list of participants in Annex 2). The convening took place at the Bronx Zoo from 11 to 12 April 2024. It started with a special Land Acknowledgement to the Munsee Lenape by Steven "Owl" Smith as WCS recognizes that the Bronx Zoo was established on their ancestral territory.

The April 2024 convening sought to build on the first-year initiative held in February 2023 (see Report) and explore several topics for broad alignment between conservation organizations, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities' visions of nature. It also introduced new topics for discussion amongst the stakeholder group on environmental peacebuilding, food security, and caste and nature. The convening broadened the dialogue with a larger set of stakeholders keeping in mind the following objectives:

- Learning, exchange of views, and taking stock of initiatives;
- Ongoing trust and bridge-building;.
- Understanding the complexity and nuances of challenges faced in implementation of conservation programs and identifying creative ways to move forward; and
- Building a collaborative agenda and next steps for positive change ahead.

Conversations within the group took place at the intersections of science, human rights, policy making, and governance. All of these areas of practice are necessary elements in our multidimensional response to the polycrisis world of climate change, biodiversity loss, pandemics, and multiple conflicts. Participants noted that a shared agenda is not only possible between Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and conservation organizations but also necessary given what our planet is confronting. However, to continue building trust and deepen partnerships, several dimensions resurfaced in discussions which required further examination:

- The importance of shared values and principles
- Humility in approach and the importance of accountability and transparency from actors external to Indigenous Peoples and local communities
- Recognition, respect, equality, and placing Indigenous Peoples and local communities at the heart of trust and agenda building processes
- Decolonizing and departing from past ways of thinking that have created the problems we face, introduction of new thought paradigms, and shifting approaches
- The intertwined nature of human rights and conservation, and the centrality of Indigenous Peoples' self-determination
- The diversity of Indigenous Peoples, and local communities, and varied situations within which conservation organizations and funders operate
- The different types of conservation organizations within the sector, and different levels of practice, progress, and understanding within each on human rights.
- Gender and the role of Indigenous women, Afro-descendant women, and women from under-represented groups and other inter-sectional identities.
- The centrality of access, control, and ownership of lands, territories, and natural resources
- Greater clarity on risks and responsibilities of conservation organizations
- Conservation organizations serving as a bridge between Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and governments
- Greater coordination and collaboration across initiatives
- Increased sharing of good practices to advance human rights in conservation
- Continuation of trust building by identifying actionable items and reporting on progress
- Maintaining this platform as a space for multi-stakeholder dialogue and sharing multiple perspectives even where they may differ.

The report captures several points of agreement and recommendations that meeting participants coalesced around. References to "we" in this report are for the group of stakeholders gathered at the convening. However many of the insights and recommendations are intended to apply more generally to the conservation sector (this includes international and national nongovernmental conservation organizations, government institutes of conservation, academia linked to conservation, and some private conservation actors), The recommendations also apply to different types of funders, and different branches of government. Several recommendations are applicable to the corporate sector as well. Individual views with different perspectives are highlighted in several sessions.

The following emerged as a **Common Agenda** for meeting participants.

- **To respect and honor the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples as part of a continued trust building process.**
- **Leave it up to communities to determine if they would like to identify as Indigenous or local communities according to their own criteria because it is about self-identification and not necessarily how governments recognize them.**
- **Practice interculturality - building knowledge through the interaction of diverse cultures, worldviews, and expressions in dialogue and mutual respect - in thought, design, and governance.**
- **Recognize cultural and linguistic diversity at the national level when we talk about Indigenous Peoples and local communities which requires nuance in thinking and approach.**
- **Recognize that the conservation sector is not monolithic and conservation organizations are at different levels of advancement in their respective human rights journeys with various learnings available from complex settings.**
- **Work in solidarity and not at cross purposes on biodiversity loss, climate change, and illicit economies that are creating complex conflicts and crises.**
- **Envision a collaborative and gender sensitive network framed around the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, CEDAW General Recommendation 39 on Indigenous Women and Girls, and international human rights treaties.**
- **Territorial access, control, and ownership over natural resources by Indigenous Peoples and local communities are essential.**
- **Be cognizant that there are limits to what conservation organizations can do and at the same time the burden should not fall on Indigenous Peoples and local communities alone to find solutions. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are required with other specialist organizations and networks.**
- **Practice the 5 principles of Indigenous Philanthropy – Respect, Relationship, Responsibility, Reciprocity, and Redistribution with a call for direct funding and thinking of Indigenous Peoples as true partners in finding solutions.**

The following key recommendations are not exhaustive but capture the essence of multiple discussions in this report:

Image: Kimheak Chhay, Yun Mane, Navy Koeung, Ali Mohammed, Sushil Raj, and Edna Kaptoyo on Learnings from the Wayfinder Circle and WCS to co-create and design a better future for our planet at COP28.

Overall Approach, Interculturality, and Gender:

- Increase cooperation and collaboration within different fora by making links between advocacy, science and conservation groups that further conservation and human rights.
- Utilize an intercultural lens to build a better understanding of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. This requires external actors to suspend presupposed solutions or assumptions about communities, especially on gender relations and Indigenous women. Many of Indigenous women are matriarchs and hold power within their communities in a different way to what may be perceived as obvious forms of power.
- Understand and implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), CEDAW Recommendation 39 on Indigenous women and girls, and the rights enshrined in various international human rights treaties.
- Increase awareness, education, and human rights staffing and resourcing within the conservation sector that introduces different expertise and thought processes. This requires flexible resourcing from funders for infrastructure support.
- Hire more Indigenous Peoples and people from local communities, including women from Afro-descendant, under-represented minorities, and other intersectional identities at all levels of the conservation sector, particularly in leadership.
- Review Protected Areas programming to look at territories, spiritual rights, economic, social, and cultural rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Extractives, Mining, Renewables, and Protected Areas:

- Examine legal regimes to build safeguards and minimum standards on Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, and advocate for the prohibition of industrial mining in protected and conserved areas.
- Step up engagement with corporations to raise their understanding of Indigenous Peoples and local community rights, support the development of Indigenous Peoples' and human rights corporate policies, and seek their implementation in areas that are adjacent to or overlap with protected and conserved areas.
- Conduct further advocacy on a just transition by showing the impacts of mining for renewables on Indigenous and Traditional Territories, and advocate for alternative solutions to achieve a just transition.
- Conservation actors should provide further support and input into forestry, conservation, and protected area law amendments that respect and protect human rights.

Conflict Prevention, Talking to Governments, and Human Rights Actors:

- Conservation actors, including funders, can help strengthen customary conflict resolution mechanisms, and support a network of local leaders to build drivers of peace and help with conflict prevention.
- Robust grievance redress mechanisms should be established and maintained. Any allegation of a human rights abuse or violation should be promptly investigated, and if established, remedy provided.
- Conservation actors, including funders, should build further capacities to negotiate with governments and introduce human rights at the outset of discussions around public private partnerships, and other modalities of technical assistance engagement.
- Conservation actors, including funders, can leverage long term flexible funding to hold discussions on human rights and evolving threats in different landscapes and seascapes.
- Discussions with government officials can employ different frames such as a focus on legacy questions asking about what is bequeathed to future generations beyond the short-term while centering Indigenous epistemologies and outlooks.
- Human rights and conservation groups should work in a complimentary manner with governments keeping in mind their distinct roles and comparative advantages.
- When national standards are not human rights compliant or fall short, international human rights standards should guide programming.

Caste and nature, food sovereignty, and different international initiatives:

- Conservation actors should deliberate further on how they can create spaces for a deeper discourse on caste and nature.
- Implementation of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is key for caste affected communities particularly as many caste-based occupations and environmental conditions directly undermine human dignity and perpetuate both stigma and discrimination.
- The concept of food sovereignty, food systems, and links to conservation, as well as recommendations from various studies that highlight how Indigenous Peoples Food Systems contribute to resilience should be examined further.
- The Small Scale Fisheries Trust Fund is one example of how food security is being addressed to support locally managed marine areas and marine ocean defenders who are injured or murdered. Several recommendations from this Trust Fund should be taken up further.
- Recommendations from several international initiatives on conservation and human rights should be reviewed for implementation. Additional methods of coordination and collaboration amongst the various initiatives should be created.

This stakeholder group will continue its dialogue, invite other actors as relevant, and share concrete steps that conservation organizations are taking in defining policies, procedures, resource sharing, and making shifts that are benefitting both Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

The meeting took place under Chatham House discussions, hence this report reflects summary discussions without individual attribution. Presentations by individuals that are specifically highlighted in the report are shared on the basis of consent.

ALIGNING AGENDAS: UNDERSTANDING CAPACITIES FOR ALL AND INTERCULTURALITY IN THOUGHT, DESIGN, AND GOVERNANCE

"Let us reverse the air of capacity building. It should not flow in just one direction from external organizations to communities" - Participant

In taking a historical perspective it is important to note that organizations and global agendas have evolved over the last 25 years. Many Indigenous Peoples frequently saw conservation organizations as antagonists that undermined their territorial rights, with racism embedded in many historical conservation and government ideologies of displacing people to seek "pristine wilderness" by viewing Indigenous Peoples as "primitive", destructive, or contrary to nature. When conservation organizations began to recognize key biodiversity hotspots as areas protected by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, the conversation began to shift for several within the sector. Some conservation organizations started to create internal structures to make Indigenous Peoples and human rights part of conservation programming.

This shift has been further accelerated by another recognition that we must come together for nature and our common humanity given the magnitude of the challenges our planet and societies are confronting. We live in a polycrisis world of large-scale climate disruptions, the mass extinction of species through biodiversity loss, increased risks to human and animal health due to zoonotic origin pandemics, coupled with an increase in different types of violent conflicts. The overarching planetary crisis compels us to look at approaches in a holistic way where conservation organizations, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities walk a path as equals, and contribute to joint solutions.

For this to happen, conservation organizations, funders, governments, and individuals have to decolonize their approaches and minds. Some conservation actors have made progress while others lag behind in the recognition of and respect for different world views and knowledge systems of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. This includes approaching through interculturality i.e. building knowledge through the interaction of diverse cultures and expressions in dialogue and mutual respect when defining policies, procedures, and ways of working. We also have to be mindful of the diversity within Indigenous Peoples globally as they are not monolithic. At the same time this diversity of contexts and cultures maintains a commonality that importantly rests upon their collective rights and relationship with nature, lands, and territories.

- **Recognition and respect moves the conversation from a transactional one focused solely on financial resources to a deeper one of partnership.**
- **As communities face external threats, forced assimilation, and destruction of their cultures, it is very important to focus on advancing cultural rights and revitalization that strengthens communities and their ability to respond to external threats.**

Image: With Elder Jorge Soplin of Community Chino at Tamshiyacu Tahuyo Communal Reserve, Loreto Department in the Peruvian Amazon created with the support of WCS. Credit: Sushil Raj © WCS

Part of our walk together is to understand that Indigenous Peoples' organizations are different from traditional nongovernmental or civil society organizations. They are deeply embedded within their communities which results in direct accountability to those communities, hence they have a hybrid nature that requires a different type of resourcing. When Indigenous Peoples' organizations engage with conservation organizations or other actors outside of their communities they also take on different risks.

- **External organizations have to be extra sensitive to not rip asunder the culture of Indigenous Peoples by funding the wrong institutions, creating elite capture, dividing communities, or tokenizing resourcing. It is important for them to learn how communities function such that capacity building and knowledge sharing are not one directional from external organizations to communities.**
- **Accountability is a mutual path. This happens by respecting and supporting strong governance structures. A key element of this is ensuring the full participation of all, especially the Indigenous women and youth in decision making processes.**
- **Some conservation organizations have created governance spaces for Indigenous Peoples on their councils and within their governance structures. Such models should be studied carefully to draw lessons and create similar or new types of spaces within other parts of the conservation sector.**
- **It is essential for philanthropy, and funders more broadly, to provide agency to Indigenous Peoples' organizations in a way that dependencies are not created, and "empowerment" is measured in meaningful ways that enables them to lead.**

Image: WCS staff sharing practices from regions to further build internal capacities on Conservation & Human Rights.

When we speak about capacity building, we must ensure it is about the capacities of all stakeholders – conservation organizations, philanthropy, governments, bilateral and multilateral institutions, corporations, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities.

We must ask the question - what does capacity building mean? From the perspective of Indigenous Peoples and local communities it is frequently about who asks the questions, what type of questions are posed, and how governance structures are strengthened. If negative practices within customs or traditions exist, the focus should be on supporting communities with their own internal processes to address them. For conservation organizations capacity building should focus on what they need to learn from Indigenous ways of being and knowing. Conservation organizations also need to have the capacities and structures to respond to allegations of human rights violations or abuse.

- **Conservation organizations must include human rights in the policies, positions, and monitoring systems they create for their work. Indigenous Peoples' rights have to be protected by upholding UNDRIP, with a focus on free, prior, and informed consent when working with governments. (Cultural Survival, First Peoples Worldwide & SIRGE Coalition Guide on FPIC)**
- **Conservation organizations need to resource themselves robustly on human rights in order to respond to, avoid, or prevent future human rights violations.**
- **Nongovernmental organizations that work with communities need better internal education and awareness programs to avoid imposing uninformed external views. This will help to build trust and better synergies.**
- **Building fellowship programs for Indigenous Peoples and local communities and their youth can help in several ways, including fund and budget management; coordination; leadership; and other skills required in the non-traditional worlds to effectively protect their lands and territories.**

Image: Science for Nature and People Partnership (SNAPP) One Water Meeting in Fiji (2023)
Credit: Tom Vierus ©WCS

As conservation organizations begin to respect different world views and knowledge systems, new pathways for collaboration can be created. Another area of importance is resourcing Indigenous Peoples' and local community organizations and networks to enable them to play an enhanced role. We can open doors of multilateral organizations for financing, but this requires champions within the conservation sector to create avenues. And multilateral institutions must simplify their processes and requirements.

- **Opening doors is about genuine and meaningful involvement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities that creates an enabling environment such that it moves away from tokenism. Multilateral institutions should open up their processes and further simplify access requirements.**

- **Heterogeneity of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and the complexity of contexts necessitates a deference to the leadership within communities and place-based organizations as they know their situation best.**

- **Without understanding and believing in intercultural relations we will not be able to understand the other, nor sustain efforts to center Indigenous Peoples and local communities.**

Several conservation organizations have learnt over time that it is not possible to conserve forests and water if people do not have access to health, education, and other services. Nature cannot be protected without respecting Indigenous and local economies and the ecosystems they live in. This requires close attention to the following areas to meaningfully align with Indigenous Peoples and local communities: **territories, spiritual rights, economic, social, and cultural rights.**

- **Key Question: How do we reorganize programming, staffing, and operations in protected areas to examine and understand these issues in a deeper way to give genuine effect to them?**
- **External organizations can facilitate questions or discussion on these topics. They can invite Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and other under-represented communities in co-design, co-decision making on programs, and also explore co-management models.**

More Trees Fewer Cows: An example of alignment

More Trees Fewer Cows initiative is an initiative of the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB), the Wildlife Conservation Society, and Rewild. It was presented as one example of building regional synergies and alliances between conservation organizations and Indigenous Peoples to tackle common challenges on an equal footing. The campaign was launched to raise awareness and take a stand against the devastating impact of illegal cattle ranching in Indigenous Territories and Protected Areas across Mesoamerica's forests. Illegal cattle ranching within Mesoamerica's protected areas and Indigenous territories is the primary driver of deforestation, and since it is often tied to organized crime and drug trafficking, it endangers the physical, cultural, food, and water security of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

The More Trees Fewer Cows Initiative therefore focuses on several areas to tackle these complex and dangerous challenges:

- government responsibility to commit to deforestation-free procurement;
- regulation and enforcement of regulations;
- corporate responsibility to ensure and demonstrate traceability of cattle ranching products;
- and strengthening Indigenous Peoples and local communities in ways that they can manage and defend their territories.

The initiative also focuses on promoting healthy, climate-resilient, and forest-friendly traditional food systems. For example, Milpa is a system of cultivation of various ancestral varieties of corn.

THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN, WOMEN OF AFRICAN DESCENT, AND THOSE FROM OTHER INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES: COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

"We will be able to exercise our individual rights if our collective rights are respected. From within our communities, we want to create our own theory and practice. We don't want to adapt an external concept of feminism." – Dr. Myrna Cunningham Kain

Inclusiveness and the central role played by Indigenous women, young people, children and people with disabilities are essential elements to consider when conservation organizations and funders self assess their own capacities and programs to determine how these show up in their work.

Indigenous women play an instrumental role in the reproduction of culture, knowledge, language, spirituality and protection of nature. Questions are often posed about customary and traditional practices that may appear unequal or discriminatory on the surface.

- **Outside actors need to be humble and sensitive to context when they seek to engage Indigenous Peoples. They should not come into a community with the preconceived idea of a gender imbalance.**

It is also important to be mindful of situations where Indigenous men may begin to reproduce external cultural values within Indigenous and other traditional societies after returning from the military, war, working with corporations, or when communities become heavily monetized which then leads to loss of traditional values and oppression of women.

- **While some practices are created by patriarchal systems that marginalize women, there are many Indigenous and other traditional societies who have matriarchal systems and matriarchs within them that hold power and influence. This power can be overt or behind the scenes. Their role must be clearly understood and recognized.**

- **Indigenous Peoples should look at how men and women within the community can strengthen the ancestral way of practicing duality, i.e. respecting different identities in complementary ways.**

The strength of women in the spiritual and cultural domains is often not valued by Western societies. Indigenous women link their individual with collective rights within Indigenous cultures. It is important to defer to Indigenous women and women from other traditional communities as they navigate their own spaces within communities.

- **Indigenous women's feminism and the feminism of Afro-descendant, Dalit, or women from other identities must be understood as distinct from Western feminism which does not prioritize collective rights.**

Image: Bunong Indigenous Women in Cambodia. © Filip Agoo & Everland

Gender sensitive approaches of outside institutions need to reflect this by letting Indigenous, Afro-descendant and women of other identities be their own protagonists who set the agenda. When NGOs offer capacity building workshops to women without understanding their role within families and communities it can create conflicts.

- **Recognize the power of women at the grassroots and let Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and women from other under-represented communities lead.**
- **Conservation organizations and funders should hire more Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and women from other under-represented minorities in their staffing, especially in leadership, and create an enabling environment for their success. This can not only help in building a better understanding of gender and equality, but also enable different types of conversations with communities.**
- **Funders should not merely tick the box about men and women's participation and roles for their funding requirements but acquire a deeper understanding because many cultures do not use the same metrics and look at different models of stewardship by women.**
- **All organizations should carefully read, understand, and implement CEDAW General Recommendation 39 on the rights of Indigenous women and Girls.**

After laying the groundwork for a better understanding, agenda alignment, and the role of Indigenous women and women from other intersectional identities, the meeting launched into several thematic discussions of importance to participants. In addition to Indigenous Peoples there were focused sessions on people of African Descent and Dalits.

LAND RIGHTS, THREATS, AND SECURITY: THE MYRIAD CHALLENGES FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS

Building on last year's conversations, this session took a deeper dive into various dimensions of land rights and threats faced by people of African descent and Indigenous Peoples.

In terms of framing land rights with respect to people of African descent, it is about understanding the tenuous links between the past and present, and focusing on their future development. Like Indigenous Peoples, it is important to be mindful that people of African descent are neither monochromatic nor monolithic and each country or local context presents its own reality and dimensions. In several contexts people of African descent are considered different but akin to Indigenous Peoples outside of the African continent on account of their collective rights.

Image: Local Afro-Colombian women in Colombia's Naya River Delta which contains nursing grounds that are critical to the food security, economy, and cultural heritage.
Credit: Silva Javier (WCS Colombia)

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights in Saramaka People vs. Suriname

After a decade of legal struggle in 2007 the Saamaka People of Suriname who are descendants of self-liberated slaves of African descent won a victory before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Their ancestors signed a peace treaty with the Dutch colonizers that granted them their freedom and territory by 1762. This community had established its own language, religion, kinship and legal system (Beginning in mid-2010, the people formerly known as "Saramaka" began calling themselves, in their official documents, "Saamaka," to conform to their own pronunciation.)

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights in Saramaka People vs. Suriname recommended that in situations where communities agree to outside use of their land and resources, such concessions should respect: (1) effective participation of the respective community, including prior consent; (2) distribution of benefits in reasonable shares between the state and the community; and (3) prior assessment of the environmental and social impact in the community's territory.

A key challenge encompassing the land rights of people of African descent is the erasure, removal of, or absence in writing of title, deeds, and related documentation showing ownership or claim to land. Furthermore, in the oral tradition of many people of African descent, the ownership and claim to ancestral lands has been compromised with overlays of complex inheritance laws. It has also been weaponized by many taxation laws to reduce or erase those claims. Changes in legal systems in colonial and post-colonial governments have left a range of different legal rules and requirements with inconsistent and incoherent application of prevailing customs. This has been exploited by dominant groups regrettably along the lines of race.

The Minority Rights Group has cited an example illustrative of this. "Among the poorest of Afro-Brazilians are inhabitants of Quilombolas – communities originally established by fugitive slaves in remote rural areas – continue to struggle to assert their cultural identity and historical ties to these lands."

- **The issue of land rights for people of African descent is one of the fundamental pillars of reparatory justice, of development, and of securing a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.**

In the Mesoamerican region there is also a concept of “mestizo colonization” where mixed ethnic groups take over Indigenous lands and territories alongside drug traffickers taking advantage of Indigenous Territories. The previous Honduran government had labeled many Indigenous Peoples as criminals whereas the issue is fundamentally of drug traffickers, and not farmers. In the Moskitia region of Honduras 248 Committees have been formed with each committee looking at how to manage the natural resources in their territories while focusing on recovery of lands. Previously legal documentation did not exist in terms of land ownership. WCS shared an example of how it was supporting communities of Indigenous Peoples and farmers in this area of Moskitia.

Image: Firebreak cleaning in the restoration area in La Colorada/El Molino/El Tanque, Guatemala.

A key challenge to land rights is that governments often lack the understanding sub-nationally, the political will, or resources to apply the international legal framework at the national level even if they adopt standards internationally. In several instances national laws may be incongruent with international standards. Where laws are not implemented matters frequently move into courts and litigation.

The Rights and Resources Land Rights Standard was presented as a helpful tool on land issues.

EXTRACTIVES, MINING, AND RENEWABLES – WHAT REALLY IS JUST IN THE ENERGY TRANSITION AMIDST A CONTESTATION OVER LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCE RIGHTS?

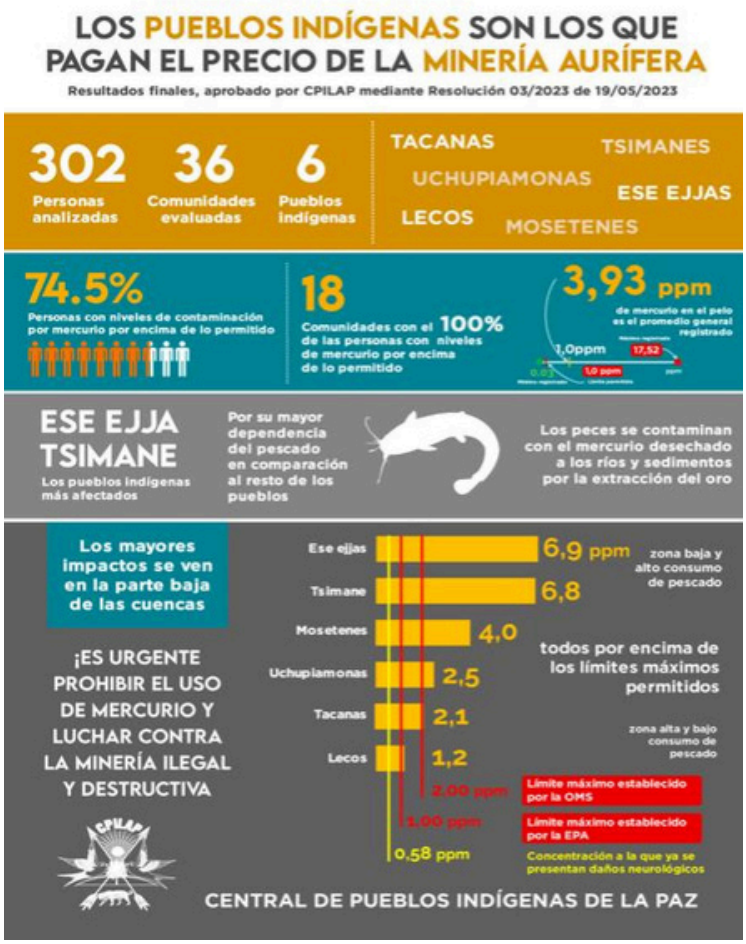
According to a study based on a dataset by the University of Queensland 54% of energy transition minerals projects are on or near lands of Indigenous peoples. An analysis in the U.S. found more than 75% of lithium, copper and nickel reserves and resources are within 35 miles of Native American reservations. It is essential to recognize that while certain energy sources may be classified as renewable, the outputs involved in their production, such as the destruction of natural habitats and the impacts of mining on the social fabric of communities, are not. Both industrial mining in general and large-scale mining for renewables require infrastructure, ports, and transportation, which bring significant social impacts.

So called "Man camps" are often established in areas that overlap with Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' territories. In addition to severe pollution, these settlements are frequently associated with increased sexual and gender-based violence, as well as tragic stories of missing or murdered Indigenous women and children.

Some data indicates a correlation between foreign direct investment in mining and an increase in conflict. According to a recent study by the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, and the Copenhagen Business Schools on the corollary between foreign investments and Indigenous conflicts, foreign direct investment (FDI) increases armed conflict across all sectors. The report found that where both Indigenous Peoples' lands and FDI exist, there will be an additional 6.7 armed conflicts in the following year.

- **Stockpiling is taking place due to unnecessary mining and market volatility. The potential consequences of unnecessary mining and the accumulation of massive metal stockpiles are severe for Indigenous Peoples, who suffer the cost. Corporations and governments need to look at this carefully.**

- **Investors, governments, and end-user companies also need to invest in research and development. They should explore other solutions and alternatives including investment into public transportation systems, reuse, repair, and recycling programs, battery chemistry advances, reducing mineral dependence, and increasing the efficiency of transition minerals to prevent and mitigate further destruction of nature and impacts on people.**



Infographic: Results of a scientific study revealed that 75 percent of Indigenous Peoples in the northern La Paz are poisoned with high levels of mercury.

Gold mining in Bolivia utilizes mercury that has led to poisoning of Indigenous Peoples. Although ancestral panning for gold exists in some Indigenous Peoples' territories most of the activities using machinery and mercury occur upstream in the highlands where mining has taken over entire communities.

Historically, many families in the highlands and lowlands have supplemented income through gold panning but have been pushed to mechanized activities by criminal networks. Lowland Indigenous riverine communities are the most affected by mercury poisoning.

Governments in different countries, and particularly the Amazon, are unable to effectively respond to illegal gold mining. Resourcing Indigenous Peoples' territorial management represents an opportunity to respond to this governance gap which impacts their right to health and the rule of law.

Gold mining in Bolivia that caused harm and action taken by Indigenous Peoples

In 2023 the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of La Paz (CPILAP) conducted mercury poison testing and research in 36 communities of six different Indigenous Peoples (Tacana, Tsimanes, Uchupiomonas, Lecos, Mostenes, Esse Ejjas) with the support of WCS. They worked closely with Indigenous youth and sued several mining actors for the mercury poisoning of the community based on a right to life violation of Indigenous Peoples. Communities that were not directly mining were affected by pollution due to their downstream location from the source of mercury contamination. Due to CPILAP's advocacy and evidence provided by them a historic decision was handed down by the local court.

Image: Manus Island logging road under construction in Papua New Guinea. Credit: Elodie Van Lierde

There are several areas that we can support and draw attention to:

- **Examine legal regimes to ensure they build in safeguards and minimum standards on free, prior, and informed consent.**
- **Focus on boundaries of protected and conserved areas and advocate for the prohibition of industrial or other types of destructive mining in these places.**
- **Step up corporate engagement and work with companies to raise their understanding of risks to Indigenous Peoples and local communities, support the development of their Indigenous Peoples' corporate policies, and seek their implementation.**
- **Increase cooperation and collaboration between different spaces by making the link between advocacy, science, and conservation groups to develop coalitions.**
- **Increase research on the impacts of different types of mining, including mining for renewables and support communities in ascertaining those impacts.**
- **Conduct further advocacy on a just transition by showing these impacts on Indigenous and Traditional Territories and present other solutions for a just transition.**
- **Utilize technologies and maps to spatially understand what is happening in real time and where rights are being violated that undermine the rights to life, health, nature. Focus on methods to protect biodiversity simultaneously.**

The absence of free, prior, and informed consent and the unaddressed negative impacts of mining, as well as other types of natural resource extraction can give rise to protests, litigation, and social or political mobilization around natural resource-based conflicts.

CONFLICT PREVENTION, ENVIRONMENTAL PEACEBUILDING, AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Although there is no agreed definition of conflict prevention it is generally understood as prevention of armed or violent conflict through means that encompass immediate, short-term, and long-term action. Short-term actions involve operational prevention such as early warning, early response, preventive diplomacy, economic measures, sanctions, or use of force. Long-term structural prevention focuses on addressing the root causes of violent conflict, often looking at the unequal distribution of power and historical factors such as colonial and post-colonial legacies.

Generally, the discourse and practice of this field of work associates conflict prevention with violence, however, many practitioners are wary of this approach because when one views the starting point as violent conflict one can only build an absence of violence, a negative peace.

Another conceptualization of conflict prevention involves identifying and strengthening the drivers of peace. Factors that drive people to conflict differ from drivers of peace.

- **Peace, and not conflict, should therefore be the starting point of conflict prevention.**

In either approach it is important to ensure that the drivers of conflict or peace are locally grounded. International actors should serve as enablers with humility and deference to local actors while keeping their own ignorance at bay.

- **This becomes easier when outside actors engage in critical reflexivity, and their assumptions are not taken as facts which may marginalize Indigenous epistemologies.**
- **It is important to go beyond the usual suspects as international actors gravitate to English or French speakers who are good at report writing or speaking the language of international programming.**
- **Any involvement of international actors in mediation should always be based on the principle of self-determination and consent by the parties concerned.**
- **For prevention to become more universal in governance, it is important to encourage states to develop national and local prevention strategies with a reflexive approach.**

Environmental peacebuilding usually looks at natural resources or nature as a starting point to build peace. We can also look at peacebuilding the other way around as a process to help address conflicts which then leads to the protection and sustainable use of natural resources.

Criminalization of Indigenous Peoples over land and natural resources when practicing traditional ways of life in protected areas; building infrastructure or other corporate operations on ancestral lands or burial sites without their free, prior, and informed consent are amongst the factors that create conflict between states, corporations, and Indigenous Peoples. They also exacerbate existing conflict dynamics.

As conflict fractures and foments further conflict, several questions need to be asked:

- What type of conflict is at play and what role can conservation organizations play?
- What is their positionality in relation to the conflict and are they embracing a role in addressing legacy conflicts?
- If so, what does this look like in action?

When conservation organizations and funders are resourcing Target 3 on 30x30 as part of the Global Biodiversity Framework and if conflicts over rights arise in protected areas they must engage in human rights and peace driven programming as a means of addressing such conflicts.

Image: WCS visits Tchahoboka Village near Kahuzi Biega National Park, DRC.

One participant noted that in many places there can be no conservation without community and no community without conservation. The conversation should zoom out and shift beyond protected areas and eco guards to the underlying ancestral rights that have created longstanding rights claims and grievances. These are embedded in several conflicts between park officials, government, and communities beyond the immediate triggers of conflict. It is also important to underscore that environmental roadmaps or peace agreements that are adopted in a rush often do not represent any guarantees for durable peace.

- **In many places conservation cannot occur without development where the basic economic, social and cultural rights of communities, i.e. education, health, housing, adequate work, and other service related rights are absent. Addressing these can create further openings for environmental peacebuilding**

Kahuzi Biega National park was then highlighted as an example of engagement through a human rights lens and peace sensitive approach to conservation in a national park with conflict and heavy legacy issues while keeping in mind the short, medium, and long-term horizon. Such examples require thorough conflict analysis, and further examination of dialogue mechanisms to rebuild trust, move away from patronizing views, and a focus on the fundamental question of land rights.

- **Without land rights Indigenous Peoples will continue to remain at a disadvantage as power asymmetries dominate local conflicts on land and natural resources.**
- **The conservation sector can help support land titles as drivers of peace. Once titles are secured they must also be resourced.**
- **In looking at drivers of peace we have to examine spiritual and cultural rights, and the revitalization of traditional and cultural institutions that can create further openings.**
- **Conservation organizations can play a stepped-up role at the national level in providing input into relevant forestry, conservation, and protected area laws that can support the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.**
- **Conservation organizations can also utilize their position to bridge the gap between Indigenous Peoples and policy or law makers.**
- **Policy advocacy on land rights should be based on both customary practices and international standards.**

Image: WCS promotes sustainable transhumance in Central African Republic (CAR) by working with herders and farmers to minimize conflicts, preserve traditional routes, and protect fragile ecosystems.

With respect to conflicts within communities a participant highlighted how these are handled in instances where rainfall, limited water points, and pasture lead to violent clashes amongst different pastoralist and transhumance groups periodically. To resolve such conflict, the traditional council system is utilized to promote peace and dialogue. The Council of Elders of the Gabbra People of Kenya, for example, is composed of clan representatives, and they utilize ritual assemblies in their traditional courts.

- **Support the strengthening of customary conflict resolution and prevention mechanisms that communities utilize.**
- **Support key community leaders, networks, and other local leaders alongside customary conflict resolution mechanisms to create a wider social ecosystem of support.**

TALKING TO GOVERNMENTS ABOUT DIFFICULT HUMAN RIGHTS TOPICS IN CONSERVATION

Image: Dawa Yangi Sherpa of WCS on a panel with Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Dave De Vera and Dr. Richard Muallil at 30x30 workshop with the Government of Philippines.

The session on conflict prevention also dovetailed into questions and recommendations on speaking with governments.

Legacy issues from colonial and post-colonial times continue in the form of past and ongoing human rights violations. Several historical instances of national parks or protected areas creation happened in the absence of consultation, consent, or in the context of forced displacement and complete disregard for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. This led to deep distrust of governments and of conservation organizations who partnered with governments in several different places.

Some noted that many of the field biologists and scientists historically working for conservation organizations did not have any training or experience in human rights and some continue to be challenged in this area. Others highlighted that as the conversation evolved between Indigenous Peoples and conservation organizations, recognition and respect came into the picture as more rights specialists and champions joined the conservation sector. It is important for scientists who remain challenged to understand the dignity and value systems of Indigenous Peoples. The application of this is premised upon humility and openness which helps to create a deeper understanding of rights and leads to the building of transparent and equal relations.

Image: WCS Executive Vice President Joe Walston and Louis Bernard Cheteu speak to Mr. Benjamin Toirambe Bamoninga, Secretary General for the Environment and Sustainable Development, DRC

The silence or inability to raise difficult human rights topics with governments in the conservation sector has been at the crux of many conservation critiques, hence participants raised several questions:

- What are the roles, responsibilities, and boundaries of international conservation organizations? Is it really their responsibility to solve human rights problems?
- Do conservation organizations and funders have a realistic understanding of what they can and cannot achieve in each context?
- What is the added value of an international NGO in relation to local civil society?
- Does trust exist between conservation organizations and civil society and government? If not, then can it be built? How is this done?
- Conflict happens when matters are not handled properly. How can conservation organizations start their work in post-conflict contexts by addressing or removing harm?
- How does one look at human rights risk, and if the risk profile defines the nature of funding and donors pull out, then who supports Indigenous Peoples and local communities in countries with high risk and low governance capacity?
- How can NGOs leverage risk to support human rights in conservation?
- What role can donors play in speaking with governments on human rights topics?
- Which types of investments can be made with government partners that can help bridge or shift the system to improve governance in relation to Indigenous Peoples and local communities particularly in government-led protected areas?
- Who undertakes the program or project design with the funders and governments and are Indigenous Peoples brought in at the inception stage of discussions?

Discussions brought several different strands of conversation together on how to engage more effectively on human rights with governments.

Participants generally agreed on the need to be mindful of multiple barriers that exist between governments and local civil society, often created due to lack of trust or legacy issues. Participants also agreed that it is important to hold governments accountable.

Some focused more specifically on low governance and high-risk countries with high biodiversity values where Indigenous Peoples and local communities need support and resources but there is little donor investment due to risk aversion.

Others spoke about donors operating in remote regions where rule of law and human rights is missing. And some others mentioned that many governments do not fully recognize human rights. Moreover civic space has shrunk in several contexts with direct affects on environmental human rights defenders.

A participant noted that although human rights are not meant to be politicized, they are often seen as a “western led” ideology that disregard local context, cultural values and norms in different countries. This leads to push back and rejection of international human rights standards. It is important to keep in mind that the cultural relativism argument does not hold when people from within cultures of each country advocate for the universal human rights to life, health, education, culture, land, nondiscrimination and equality, and access to justice to achieve their fundamental freedoms and highest aspirations. They are fighting for dignity, respect, and protection enshrined in their national constitutions and laws, and in international human rights standards which have been negotiated and adopted by their governments.

Discussions also focused on the importance of recognizing that governments struggle with multiple challenges and policy tradeoffs, however, human rights need to be at the center of their thinking. Furthermore when programs have a limited funding time frame there are additional challenges since human rights and biodiversity conservation require long-term commitments.

Image: Discussion on how rangelands of Afghanistan are degraded by overstocking and the overarching effects of climate change.

Conservation organizations can play an important role in:

1. **Dialogue with governments and use long-term investments to shift the needle quietly by applying pressure where possible.**
2. **Bridging the gap between government and civil society by facilitating dialogue or amplifying the voices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities when these are not heard.**
3. **Providing direct support to Indigenous Peoples and local civil society organizations that helps to position them in relation to their priorities viz. government and builds a pathway where international conservation NGOs may exit in the long-term and acquire complimentary and different roles.**

Conservation organizations can use programmatic funding in several ways to speak to governments:

- **Long-term programmatic and flexible funding in some of these high risk and low governance contexts can be used as a leverage point to initiate conversations on human rights.**
- **Such funding over a 15-year cycle would allow flexibility in addressing legacy issues and the ability to adapt to emerging threats which are not always obvious or foreseen. Early warning capacities can be built for early action.**
- **When hitting an impasse with governments on human rights, both conservation organizations and funders can leverage their position to stop funding after careful assessment of what such an impact would look like.**

The following recommendations are made to donor governments when they provide financial and technical resources to recipient governments but can also apply to conservation organizations as funders:

- **Comprehensively assess relevant human rights risks and potential impacts in advance of funding and clearly identify risk reduction and mitigation measures.**
- **Invest in strengthening preventive approaches that can further prevent the rise of conflicts**
- **Wherever there are human rights allegations demand investigations, seek remedy if a violation is established, and consider the suspension or return of funds**
- **Funders can look for opportunities to talk to governments about climate solutions by showing how the crises are interlinked - biodiversity, climate, and human rights threats. This provides an opening for funders to not only support the capacity of governments as human rights duty bearers but engage them in ongoing dialogue.**
- **Include human rights in biodiversity conservation programming at the very outset of negotiations over conservation agreements with host governments which go beyond the safeguards checklists.**
- **Collect input from civil society and informally bring this to governments at the earliest stages of discussion to seek their views on how the rights issues can be addressed.**

Discussions also generated several different strategies that could be utilized since effective discussions with governments frequently do not follow a template. Some organizations are better positioned for direct advocacy and others for quiet or indirect influence. These can be calibrated and utilized in a complimentary manner. The level and stage of involvement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in such discussions can also influence how conversations take place with governments on human rights.

One participant highlighted that actors outside of a country need to be extremely clear on where a government falls on the spectrum of approaching human rights. Some governments will be open while others do not want to talk about human rights publicly yet they are open to discussions privately. There are governments that may be closed to criticism but will not punish while others will punish if criticized. Within all of these contexts, Indigenous and environmental rights defenders within a country are at the highest levels of risk and exposure to risk.

Conservation organizations and funders should review their own risk profiles to determine where they lie on the spectrum with governments. They should defer to Indigenous Peoples and local communities who are making their own determinations of risk before taking up any human rights issues. In doing so conservation organizations and funders can then develop a cooperation strategy with Indigenous Peoples and local communities while being mindful of risks that consider two factors: 1) what is the change the organization would like to see; and 2) what is the organization's own capacity to implement and take initiative for such change?

Another participant indicated that the current method of presenting a human rights problem of persecution and raising it with governments for resolution does not appear to be working. An overt focus on "problem identification" which is frequently a byproduct of westernized thinking or training does not allow the conversation to advance in many instances. A shift to framing conversations around a different paradigm centered on Indigenous Peoples, rights of nature, and futures-thinking followed by a return to the present can be helpful.

- **Initiate conversations with a question on what a government official would like to leave as their legacy.**

This is designed to disrupt the current system and status quo when an official feels powerless, is co-opted, or subject to power plays and interests larger than themselves. It also helps organize resources around that conversation. The following are suggested questions that can be part of the dialogue with government:

1. What is the best possible legacy for species and biodiversity that they would like to bequeath to the next generation? This raises the vision to a higher level and is asking them to become a future ancestor.
2. What are the values and principles that should guide the articulation of that future? This can be asked of government officials who have been co-opted into a particular paradigm of development, growth, or financial interest.
3. What dominant narrative does not serve that vision for the future? Is it because the human being is placed at the center and other parts of our natural ecosystem made a secondary issue?
4. What seeds of the future are visible in the present that can be harnessed, nourished, and scaled up? Share how key rights holders such as Indigenous Peoples are showing the way.

The following recommendations emerged from the ensuing discussion:

- **Conservation organizations and funders should work with champions of human rights and the rights of nature in government to support them, give visibility to them in different platforms, and create pathways for them to affect change from within host governments.**

- **Different capacities within conservation and funding organizations can and should be built to negotiate and maintain a dialogue with host governments.**

- **Conservation organizations should be resourced properly by funders for them to continue hiring specialists in Indigenous Peoples' rights, human rights, safeguards, governance, and dialogue processes that can raise awareness within their institutions and provide the needed expertise to tackle complex challenges at the intersections of science, rights, policies, and governance.**

- **Policy teams within different organizations can utilize multiple levers to talk about human rights in national action plans focused on biodiversity and climate action, and their implementation.**

- **Conversations can further focus on the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and on security of land tenure.**

- **It is important to design environmental and social action plans after thorough analysis of risks.**

- **It is also imperative to look at international standards if national laws and frameworks are deficient in respecting and protecting human rights.**

- **We should continue to center free, prior, and informed consent as a substantive human right and not just as a process.**

- **Establish fora, undertake exchanges, create learning platforms, and capture good practice examples of engaging with governments on human rights which stakeholders can learn from and utilize.**

- **Reimagine how conservation is undertaken while looking at different practices, such as the new approach of the US Government to recognizing land rights, return of lands to Indigenous Peoples, and co-management.**

CASTE AND NATURE: DALIT EXCLUSION FROM ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSERVATION DISCOURSES, AND INTERSECTIONS WITH INDIGENEITY IN SOUTH ASIA

Image: An elderly lady from the Dalit community and her worship in Siraha District of Nepal 2006. © Sushil Raj (OHCHR-Nepal)

After discussion of several crux issues in conservation, new topics such as caste and nature were explored.

Caste as a phenomenon is not properly understood at the global level and caste in conservation discourse has either been absent or nascent. This session sought to introduce the topic, raise awareness, and show the inter-linkages between caste affected communities such as Dalits and Indigenous Peoples.

Caste as a concept has received some attention globally due to the struggles of Dalits within India, and more broadly South Asia, although caste structures and practices are also found in different parts of the world. If we look at the intersections of Dalit and Adivasi (Indigenous) lives and identities in South Asia, it enables us to better understand the historical oppression, colonial and post-colonial legacies, and the struggle for rights while attempting to shift the needle.

The hallmarks of indigeneity apply to the Dalit community in India in terms of religion, culture, and dispossession with respect to land. Land was stolen from the Dalit community through repeated dispossession and colonization. What subsequently commenced was a thought process and actuality that separated Dalits from notions of indigeneity. This also led to the exclusion of Dalits from visions of nature in academic and practitioner discourses as discrimination played out through descent and occupation-based roles.

For example the term “Ad Dharmi” based on self-identification and through the lens of religion is translated into “Original religion” and “Adivasi” as original inhabitants (Indigenous). This self-identification as Ad Dharmi juxtaposed against the caste occupation status of “Chamar” for example deprives it of the power of the “Ad”. Within the Brahmanical concept of caste, Dalits in general could not worship their ancestors and their own gods according to caste norms with the Hindu caste system superimposed on them in a form they were forced to accept. Yet in practice Dalit communities held on to ancestral worship as evidenced across the Dalit movement in India. Several communities continue to live in and around forested areas and a vast majority live in rural areas which contributed to ancestral worship.

One group (Dalits) was dispossessed and assimilated into the caste structure due to a range of factors while another group (Adivasi) fought to maintain their special relationship and identity with the forest and land, hence their Indigeneity recognized in tribal status. Despite dispossession, there are deep connections to nature in the origins and in the joint struggle of Dalits with Adivasis.

The positive association of Dalits with nature that was severed through an existence tied to discrimination, oppression, and violence imposed due to the transgression of social codes, led to Dalits being considered as non-human. They were redacted to the notion of “beasts” or animals either as subjugates or products to be sold or commodified. The hierarchy of people at the bottom was represented by animals in a derogatory manner. Animal preference by the dominant caste would make them the “cow-savior” or an arch predator in the phrase “brave as a lion” whereas their derogatory term towards the Dalit caste would be likened to a buffalo, a native animal. Durey, for instance is a famous Dalit surname which means buffalo, Dukre or Pandi – Pig, Gurram – horse, and Colhey - wolf, with animalistic characters attributed to Dalits through a derogatory lens.

Image: Sushil Raj in conversation with women from the Dalit community in Siraha District of Nepal 2006. ©Sushil Raj (OHCHR-Nepal)

The taming of an animal was like the ideation of bringing violence to the Dalit body. The idea of the beast being a human likened it to desirables and non-desirables often seen in the sexualization of Dalits. The notion of co-dependability in the Dalit community was also captured through a derogatory lens, i.e. the relation of Dalits to animals through cohabitation due to a combination of exclusion and way of life. The ability to survive with animals was then romanticized by some.

The overarching dispossession and exclusion of Dalits from the nature discourse has impacted Dalit visions, which are nevertheless found within the inner dimension of being and association. Nature for Dalits is a form of worship, and a memory of the past. There are stories such as planting trees during certain birthdays with trees being representations of Dalits in nature.

When looking at Indigenous Peoples more broadly within South Asia, there are several dimensions tied to biodiversity through the idea of the sacred landscape, and a multispecies relationship that is woven into traditional stories, language, cultural practices, and ritual life such as the paying of respect to the mountain by Sherpa guides before any journey is undertaken.

Through the lens of invisibility there is active erasure of Indigenous identity with economic and national policies driving erasure in ways that we cannot even comprehend. The impact of nationalism actively subsumes identity and language, which then leads to assimilation within a dominant paradigm or narrative, or at worst complete erasure of identity. For example, the erasure of learning about Chomolungma (Saagar Matha in Nepali or Mount Everest in English) removes the sacred dimensions of the mountain or nature conveyed through the Sherpa language. The term Sherpa is also culturally appropriated and used as a synonym for someone who shuttles between negotiating parties and carries the "load" in bilateral or multilateral meetings without recognizing what it really stands for, an Indigenous Peoples of Nepal and their way of life.

Through the lens of visibility, the upholding of caste hierarchy is very prevalent and very present in countries like Nepal when it comes to Indigenous Peoples. The Brahmanical caste system has made its way into the lives of Adivasi and Janajatis of Nepal, where caste-based occupations have swept into modes and ways of life of Indigenous mountain communities, as well as those in the plains – the Terai region.

For example, the Sherpa community's identity in the mountain regions is based on their relationship to land and the clan system. However, the Brahmanical concept of caste has swept into Sherpa communities with certain areas in traditional villages seen as belonging to those of a lower caste. An example was shared of how inter-marriage between the bride and groom of different castes within the Sherpa community created conflict. This goes back to borrowing from the concept of caste outside of Indigenous communities where endogamy is seen as essential to maintaining the caste status and hierarchy.

Image: ཇོ་མོ་གླང་མ Chomolungma (Saagar Matha in Nepali or Mount Everest in English). Credit: USNCA

Resource allocation and distribution have also been conditioned on caste status in many instances which has either overtly or implicitly been utilized to justify discrimination even when such resources are state owned. This affects location, resettlement, or allocation of public lands. At a time that Nepal was taking in Tibetan refugees, they were placed near the rivers. In the caste system of Nepal rivers are associated with death, hence the example of resettlement also points to how caste swept into state sanctioned decision making.

Much of the assignment of caste is through state recognition and the lens of the dominant castes or ruling classes. This also affects how caste is assigned across state lines in India, where one group may be assigned a Scheduled Tribe (Adivasi/Indigenous) status in one state, and "Other Backward Caste" or Scheduled Caste (Dalit) status in another state. Caste identities have to be looked at very locally within the power dynamics and enumeration within the state.

Apart from exclusion of Dalit visions of nature, the ability of Dalits to contribute to conservation discourse is often limited to a focus on how Dalits are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change due to situations of vulnerability based on marginalization, spatial location of where they live, and certain occupations under conditions lacking dignity (e.g. manual scavenging, manual sewage cleaning, unsafe garbage collection and picking from garbage landfills, animal carcass carrying, leather work, etc.). These professions do not enable class mobility, further stigmatize due to lack of safety protections and dignity, thereby creating caste-based discrimination. The focus on Dalit vulnerability then limits the discourse. Threats from climate, of course, inevitably impact and exacerbate all the intersecting power and discriminatory dynamics faced by Dalits and their ability to adapt due to the system of caste oppression but the focus should also be on a positive construction of how Dalits can contribute through their visions of nature. .

Organizations like WCS have taken inspiration from discussions on caste-based discrimination in the diaspora, including various university policies and city legislations in North America, to start a conversation by making caste a protected category from discrimination in the WCS Code of Conduct. The Code applies to staff all around the world. This is a starting point for further discussions in conservation programming.

- **Conservation organizations should deliberate further on how they can open up and create spaces for a deeper discourse on caste and nature.**

- **The right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is a key right for caste affected communities particularly as many caste-based occupations and conditions directly undermine human dignity.**

FOOD SECURITY, INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS LINKING TO CONSERVATION

Food sovereignty as a concept and framework is extremely important to Indigenous Peoples and their food system practices overlap with agroecological principles that are increasingly seen as part of the solutions portfolio in addressing our health, climate, and biodiversity crises.

The Indigenous Partnership For Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty: The Case of Meghalaya.

Within the context of Meghalaya State of India several sources of food include jhum cultivation, forest-based products, homestead gardens, wet paddies, terraced farming practices, and food sourced from water bodies.

Whilst there has been reported food insecurity in other regions, within Meghalaya severe food insecurity has been nonexistent primarily due to the multiple methods of sourcing foods. The presentation also highlighted multiple challenges to these food systems in Meghalaya due to conventional farming, homogenization of agriculture, restricted access to lands or shrinking land availability for cultivation, growing dependence on the market, climate change, loss of traditional knowledge, and youth migration.

The Indigenous Partnership highlighted the findings of the 2021 Wiphala Paper that Indigenous Peoples Food Systems contribute to resilience through:

1. Insurance against resource failures;
2. Adaptation of food resources over longer time frames through evolutionary processes;
3. Encouraging positive symbiotic interactions between species and areas in the landscape that support nutrient cycling, control pests and disease, and facilitate pollination; and
4. Sheltering the food system from the impact of ecological shocks.

INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIP FOR AGROBIODIVERSITY AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Images: Agrobiodiversity of Meghalaya and Nagaland. Credit: Bhogtoram Mawroh

Another example of food security is focused on fishing communities in the context of Africa. Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) are created for temporary and permanent fisheries closures to help in the replenishment of fish stocks and restoration of mangroves. In doing so alternative forms of livelihoods are put in place through local regulations.

MIHARI
Gestion Locale des Ressources Marines - Réseau Madagascar

MIHARI and Locally Managed Marine Areas in Madagascar

The LMMAs have several positive impacts on socio-economic well-being, fisheries management and production, the ecology and biology of the area, as well as the governance system. However they also face several challenges: conflicts in resource use and allocation; absence of a legal framework to secure and recognize rights; lack of production valuation and access to markets; as well as harmful practices linked to poverty; and isolation in remote areas. The MIHARI network of Madagascar was created to respond to these challenges by advocating for small-scale fishers' rights, capacity building of LMMA leaders, and peer to peer learning. It consists of 200+ LMMAs that involve 500,000 small scale fishers covering 17,0000 square kilometers of Madagascar's continental shelf.

Although there has been progress, several factors continue to inhibit both well-being and food security:

1. The high degree of vulnerability to climate change
2. Community-led empowerment is unable to sufficiently address the struggle for livelihoods and well-being
3. Basic human rights are not realized due to the situation in the country
4. Conflicts with industrial fishers and other users persist
5. The internal competition amongst communities is present due to poverty
6. The tourism sector impacts use by local fishers of certain territorial waters
7. Many ocean defenders are injured and murdered

To address these a Small-Scale Fisheries Trust Fund is set up with several recommendations:

- Special Funding Program for Capacity Building
- Funder Site Visits
- Social Contracts or Memoranda of Understanding with supporting NGOs
- Rigorous Donor Oversight
- Trust in Indigenous Peoples and local communities' Autonomy
- Simplified Criteria
- Evaluation of Intermediaries
- Consideration of Local Context
- Investment in Indigenous Peoples and local communities
- Transparency from NGOs

In working with Indigenous Peoples and local communities the Snow Leopard Trust's Partnership Principles were also cited.

Following these presentations there was a brief discussion on market mechanisms.

Image: Navy Koeung, a community leader from the Bunong Indigenous Peoples of Keo Seima speaks about the importance of land rights and benefits of REDD+ in her community at COP28 with Kimheak Chhay of WCS Interpreting.

A brief discussion on markets and knowledge mechanisms

Discussion also focused on critical questions related to REDD+ given a distrust of market-based mechanisms due to failures of these markets when it comes to carbon offsets in several places. At the same time examples were mentioned where REDD+ initiatives have supported the land rights of Indigenous Peoples and have been successful.

The importance of working together on biodiversity markets and credits was highlighted as these are emerging in a rather opaque manner in global discourse. They require further transparency in approach with a focus on how and by whom they are defined along with the importance of building safeguards.

One participant highlighted the importance of carrying out studies to document how Indigenous Peoples are helping conservation and the planet, and to also look at how carbon mechanisms have helped or hindered. Another participant mentioned that regardless of research it is the knowledge and existence of Indigenous Peoples and the connection to their lands and territories which are important and should be the basis of learning and decision making. A challenge was raised on how to think differently about knowledge in written form when the traditions of many Indigenous Peoples are oral.

- **Examine further the carbon markets and regulations related to how they function and collaborate with those developing new standards and guidelines that center and involve Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the design of standards and in decision making.**
- **External actors should not research and publish studies internationally without community consent. There can be data ownership and sovereignty concerns.**

UPDATES FROM DIFFERENT INITIATIVES ON CONSERVATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Rights and Resources Initiative, Campaign for Nature, Global Alliance of Territorial Communities and the ICCA Consortium came together in a September 2023 workshop on Advancing Community Rights in Areas-Based Conservation. The focus was Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and the robust inclusion of language on Indigenous Peoples rights and local communities within the GBF. The purpose was to provide a space to share perspectives, connection, and develop an initial strategy and action plan for rights-based implementation and monitoring of conservation area targets.

- **Visit the report of this workshop, its recommendations, and key actions for collaboration.**

In February 2024 the International Workshop on Advancing Rights and Equity in the Implementation of Target 3 was hosted by IMPACT Kenya, a Maasai organization, and co-convened with IUCN CEESP, WCPA, IIFB, Forest Peoples Program, The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and several other organizations.

- **The roadmap and its recommendations in 11 priority areas and 32 action items are available here**

UNEP also shared its efforts in clarifying existing human rights norms for conservation. The focus of this effort is to develop principles directed at non-state actors, primarily conservation organizations and funders. This effort is ongoing based on a series of consultations and the principles will be made public in due course.

Namati shared its work about the grassroots justice network and the pursuit of justice through community paralegals . The concept of community paralegals is to move from the sometimes opaque and frequently expensive profession of the law to which many communities do not have access, to finding advocates within the community who can assist with legal solutions. Communicating about the cost effectiveness, vitality, and practicality of justice work through community paralegals is important as they help make law a reality for many who face multiple barriers to access justice. Several resources were shared, including the Environmental Justice Practice Guide and a Community Land Protection Facilitator's Guide. An invitation was also issued to join Namati's carbon justice campaign work.

- **Discussions highlighted the need to collaborate and coordinate across the various conservation and human rights initiatives since several areas have important overlaps.**

BUILDING A COMMON AGENDA AND NEXT STEPS

The following emerged as a **Common Agenda** for meeting participants.

- **To respect and honor the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples as part of a continued trust building process.**
- **Leave it up to communities to determine if they would like to identify as Indigenous or local communities according to their own criteria because it is about self-identification and not necessarily how governments recognize them.**
- **Practice interculturality - building knowledge through the interaction of diverse cultures, worldviews, and expressions in dialogue and mutual respect - in thought, design, and governance.**
- **Recognize cultural and linguistic diversity at the national level when we talk about Indigenous Peoples and local communities which requires nuance in thinking and approach.**
- **Recognize that the conservation sector is not monolithic and conservation organizations are at different levels of advancement in their respective human rights journeys with various learnings available from complex settings.**
- **Work in solidarity and not at cross purposes on biodiversity loss, climate change, and illicit economies that are creating complex conflicts and crises.**
- **Envision a collaborative and gender sensitive network framed around the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, CEDAW General Recommendation 39 on Indigenous Women and Girls, and international human rights treaties.**
- **Territorial access, control, and ownership over natural resources by Indigenous Peoples and local communities are essential.**
- **Be cognizant that there are limits to what conservation organizations can do and at the same time the burden should not fall on Indigenous Peoples and local communities alone to find solutions. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are required with other specialist organizations and networks.**
- **Practice the 5 principles of Indigenous Philanthropy – Respect, Relationship, Responsibility, Reciprocity, and Redistribution with a call for direct funding and thinking of Indigenous Peoples as true partners in finding solutions.**

The right to self-determination remained a central feature in discussions. The key to moving forward is to recognize the importance of collective rights within human rights such that they remain central and are not undermined. We must start with a broader view of sovereignty of peoples and their scale of living across homelands and waters within which we situate our discourse. This helps center people of place who are often made invisible by maps of nation-states even though Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities frequently transcend borders.

Our orientation must be positive around principles, norms, codes of practice, customs, and accountability. In several places communities may not be explicitly pursuing biodiversity goals but do apply their customs, norms, and practices that yield conservation outcomes. There are several examples that can be drawn from the ICCA Consortium with 225 members across more than 80 countries, some of whom identify as Indigenous Peoples and others as local communities.

Concluding observations repeated the importance of commitment and intentionality for conservation organizations and funders as we focus on driving transformation in the conservation sector by centering and upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. We must look at power, governance, and Indigenous Peoples in a different way, and recognize the distinctions and intersections amongst Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent, traditional and other communities and peoples such as Dalits.

The commitment to centering rights, while understanding nuance, moves us beyond simplified conversations and narratives. It goes into the depth of finding solutions to complex problems, while sending a broader message to other stakeholders in restoring relationships with nature and deploying funding to build solidarity and systems change.

The group identified some initial **next steps:**

- Reach out to the broader philanthropic network, especially funders that do not have the same understanding of Indigenous Peoples and local community rights. Invite Directors of such networks in conversation.
- There can be further work on community land protection by different stakeholders in the network such as setting up of democratic committees in boundary demarcation, building accountability mechanisms, and developing bylaws on governance
- This stakeholder group can consistently advocate with anyone undertaking carbon projects to respect the customary land rights irrespective of title and link to the Community Land Protection Facilitator's Guide.
- Continue the dialogue. At the next meeting of this stakeholder group convened by WCS, participants would like conservation organizations to share updates and concrete steps they are taking within their organizations in defining policies and procedures, sharing resources, and making shifts that are benefitting Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

If you would like to be part of this conversation please contact Sushil Raj (sraj@wcs.org) and Dawa Yangi Sherpa (dsherpa@wcs.org).

ANNEXES

Annex 1 Concept Note & Agenda

Annex 2 Participant List

Presentations available upon request and consent of the individual

ANNEX 1. CONCEPT NOTE & AGENDA

Conservation and Human Rights: Building a common vision to address the biodiversity, climate change, and health crises

11-12 April 2024

Venue: WCS Global Building and Flaherty Hall at the Bronx Zoo, New York

Context and rationale for the meeting

WCS organized a small gathering of stakeholders from the conservation and human rights sectors, as well as Indigenous Peoples and local communities in February 2023. The deliberations and recommendations are reflected in this report. This first meeting sought to initiate a discussion that could recognize the failings of conservation given its historical legacy; the deep distrust of conservation organizations by various Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and institutions due to past, and at times the current practice, of "fortress conservation"; and to create a forward-looking path in a mutually collaborative way to address the biodiversity, climate, and health crises that affect us all.

In the face of these crises confronting our planet we must continue the conversation and push the boundaries to build new paradigms and approaches. This means recognizing the harm of the past that has shaped the present while actually dealing with legacy issues even as we forge forward with the incorporation of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing in our work. In practical terms we must address threats to deforestation, destruction of cultural rights, and biodiversity while continuing to secure the land rights of Indigenous Peoples and other traditional communities.

At the same time, we must engage in continuous dialogue and capacity building of governments for the recognition and protection of rights in order to open up spaces in government-led models of conservation that have historically excluded communities. Some of these solutions lie at the interface of communities, the private sector, and the government where we can facilitate Indigenous-led and managed solutions with national and local governments.

Other solutions lie in the creation of private enterprise, or working with the corporate sector, and, in multiple instances, help develop country-based direct access funds for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, while also designing new partnerships at the country level.

Among the recommendations of the February 2023 meeting were to expand the group, be guided by Indigenous value systems to make Indigenous Peoples' rights a reality within conservation spaces, establish mechanisms of dialogue between Indigenous Peoples and authorities where there are disagreements, unlock further funding from multilaterals such as the Green Climate Fund and build more collective voice, particularly at the national level.

This second meeting is designed to build upon the first-year initiative, explore some of the above topics, introduce new ones, and broaden the dialogue with a larger set of stakeholders keeping in mind the following objectives:

- Learning, exchange of views, and taking stock of initiatives.
- Ongoing trust and bridge-building.
- Understanding the complexity and nuances of challenges faced in implementation of conservation programs and identifying creative ways to move forward; and
- Building a collaborative agenda and next steps for positive change ahead.

In this process we are not just aiming to have “improved conservation” or a “human rights-based approach to conservation” (although both should be outcomes) but to create a trans-sectoral discipline of individuals committed to a process of constant refinement and improvement to how we address multiple threats and how we collectively protect and restore nature - both for its cultural and natural heritage - so that we can be effective, equitable, just, and transformative.

The meeting will function under Chatham House style discussions that can meaningfully get into the depths of the challenges we confront and develop a summary report that does not attribute ideas or thoughts to any one individual or institution.

AGENDA

Day 1 – April 11 at WCS Global Conservation Program Conference Room

8:30 to 8: 55am	*Arrivals/Breakfast*
9:00 to 9:10am	Land Acknowledgement and Respects
9:10 to 9:30am	Introductions with an ice breaker
9:30 to 9:45am	Welcome remarks – building collectively
9:45 to 10:30am	***Theme: Building greater synergies between the Conservation and Indigenous Peoples' Rights Agendas at the Global Level*** Global reflections; Indigenous women in global and regional agendas; and CEDAW Recommendation 39
10:30 to 11:15pm (Scheduled in this slot due to time zone and availability of speakers)	***Theme: Food security, Indigenous and local community food systems linking to conservation***
11:15 to 11:30am	*Coffee Break*
11:30am to 12:15pm	***Theme: Regional collaborations between Conservation organizations and Indigenous Peoples***
12:15 to 1:15pm	***Theme: Land rights, threats, and security*** Framing remarks, including women of African descent and land Land Rights of Afro-descendants and the RRI Land Rights Standard Working with both Government and Indigenous Peoples to address threats
1:15 to 2:15pm	*Lunch on site*
2:15 to 3:30pm	***Theme: Extractives, Mining for Renewables, and the Just Transition***

	What are the issues and what is being done? Wins and challenges from mercury mining
3:30 to 3:45pm	***Coffee Break***
3:45 to 5:00pm	***Theme: Conflict Prevention, Environmental Peacebuilding, and Cultural Rights*** Setting the stage Learning from traditional dispute resolution mechanisms of the Gabbra people Updates on Kahuzi Biega National Park and the Bukavu roadmap implementation - working towards peace Moving from conflict to community forestry concessions in the DRC How do we revitalize and strengthen cultural rights in conservation and environmental programming?
5:00 to 6:00 pm	***Talking to governments on difficult human rights and conservation subjects***: What can conservation organizations do? What can donors do? What do governments say? Quiet/Preventive Diplomacy What strategies are working/what is not working?
6:15 to 8pm	***Drinks and Tapas at the Bronx Beer Hall, Arthur Avenue***

Day 2 – April 12 at Flaherty Hall near Congo Forest exhibit

8:30 to 9:00am	*Arrivals/Breakfast*
9 to 9:30am	General Recap of Day 1 discussions Participant reflections from Day 1
9:30 to 10:15am	***Talking to governments on difficult human rights and conservation subjects (Continued)***
10:15 to 11:30am	***Theme – Caste, Nature, and Conservation: an under-represented analysis*** Caste-based occupations and Dalit exclusion from environmental and conservation discourse; What are Dalit visions for Nature? Dalit/Caste/Adivasi (Indigenous) intersections in South Asia- what are some of these. What can we do in conservation programming? Caste as a protected class in the WCS Code of Conduct
11:30 to 11:45am	*Coffee/Tea Break*
11:45am to 1:30pm	***Updates from different initiatives on conservation and human rights*** Human Rights Standards for Conservation Report on Rights Based Approaches RRI/ICCA/GATC/Campaign for Nature IUCN and other initiatives Legal empowerment and community paralegals as a strategy for securing rights-respecting, community-driven conservation; and a global campaign being developed on carbon justice

	Conservation Initiative on Human Rights: Strategy Refresh
1:30 to 2:30pm	*Lunch + on-site guided Zoo Tour available for those interested*
2:30 to 3:30pm	**Continue Building a Common Agenda and Purpose: Are there specific areas that can be identified?** 5-minute reflections from different participants Discussion 5 minutes each additional speakers - On policy - Programming - Funding - Networking - Advocacy Open discussion
3:30 to 3:45pm	*Coffee Break*
3:45 to 5:15pm	**Continue Building a Common Agenda and Purpose - Continued**
5:15 to 5:30pm	Bike Rack issues
5:30 – 6:00pm	Tying it all together
6:00pm	*Wine and food reception on premises*

ANNEX 2. PARTICIPANT LIST

Conservation and Human Rights Meeting | April 11-12, 2024

Participant list: Online and In person

1. Dr. Alain Frechette, Director, Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI)
2. Ali Mohammed, Program Manager Tokkumma Aada Trust, Kenya Gabbra People, Member of the Wayfinder Circle *(Online Participant)*
3. Anastasiya Kowal, Program Officer, WCS
4. André Takeshi Matsubara, Environmental & Social Safeguards Coordinator, Legacy Landscapes Fund (LLF) *(Online Participant)*
5. Astrid Puentes Riaño, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment
6. Dr. Avecita Chicchon, Director, Andes Amazon, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
7. Dr. Barbara G Reynolds, Chairperson, United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent *(Statement)*
8. Dr. Bhogtoram Mawroh, TIP-NESFAS International Indigenous Peoples Food issues Coordinator, NESFAS
9. Carla F. Fredericks, CEO of The Christensen Fund
10. Casey Box, Director, Director, Global Strategy, The Christensen Fund
11. Dr. Christopher Filardi, Chief Program Officer, Nia Tero
12. Dawa Yangi Sherpa, Social Safeguards Specialist, WCS
13. Diane Christensen, WCS Board Member and President, The Christensen Fund
14. Diel Mochire Mwenge, Director, Programme Intégré pour le Développement du Peuple Pygmée au Kivu (PIDP); Member of WCS High Ambition Fund IP&LC Advisory Committee (Online Participant)

15. Edgard Scott, Country Director, Nicaragua and Honduras, WCS *(Online Participant)*
16. Elvis Greham Manister, Chairman of the Board of Directors of MASTA, an organization of the Miskito People in Honduras *(Online Participant)*
17. Francisco Souza, Vice President Global Center on Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, Conservation International *(Online Participant)*
18. Fred Nelson, CEO, Maliasili Network (Online Participant)
19. Galina Angarova, Executive Director, SIRGE Coalition
20. Gisela Habel, Head of the Division for environmental policy, biodiversity, forests and marine conservation of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
21. Gwasinlo Thong, Chairman of Sendenyu Community Biodiversity Committee and Member of WCS High Ambition Fund IP&LC Advisory Committee *(Online Participant)*
22. Gustavo Sánchez Valle, President of Red MOCAF & Executive Commission of the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests, AMPB *(Online Participant)*
23. Helen Tugendhat, Programme Coordinator, Environmental Governance Programme (EGP), Forest Peoples Programme
24. Holly Jonas, former Global Coordinator, ICCA Consortium *(Online Participant)*
25. Dr. Ilka Herbinger, Director Environmental and Social Safeguards & Deputy Director, Legacy Landscapes (LLF)
26. Imani Fairweather Morrison, Programme Officer, Global Small Scale Fisheries, Oak Foundation. *(Online Participant)*
27. Iniquilipi Chiari Lombardo, Global Alliance of Territorial Communities, Panama
28. Ivana Fertziger, Program Officer, Environment, Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies
29. Jenny Springer, Director, Equator Group & Fellow at RRI
30. Dr. Jeremy Radachowsky, Regional Director, Mesoamerica and Western Caribbean, WCS
31. Joe Walston, Executive Vice President for Global Conservation, WCS
32. John Knox, Professor of International Law at Wake Forest University and Former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment

33. Dr. Joshua Castellino, Executive Co-Director & Professor of Law, Minority Rights Group International *(Online Participant)*
34. Juan Carlos Jintiach, Executive Director of Global Alliance of Territorial Communities (GATC) *(Online Participant)*
35. Dr. Juan Pablo Sarmiento, Peruvian Social Anthropologist at the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)
36. Dr. June Rubis, Global Council Co-Chair of Documenting Territories, ICCA Global Consortium
37. Kevin Currey, Program Officer, Natural Resources and Climate Change, Ford Foundation
38. Kristen Walker Painemilla, Senior Vice President Center for Communities and Conservation at Conservation International; Conservation Initiative on Human Rights
39. Levi Sucre Romero, Coordinator, Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB) *(Online Participant)*
40. Lino Illimuri Apana, Vice President, Central De Pueblos Indígenas De La Paz (CPILAP); Member of WCS High Ambition Fund IP&LC Advisory Committee
41. Lourdes Inga, Executive Director, International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (IFIP)
42. Masego Madzwamuse, Environment Programme Director, Oak Foundation *(Online Participant)*
43. Milka Chepkorir, ICCA Consortium's Secretariat and Indigenous Sengwer, Kenya
44. Dr. Myrna Cunningham Kain, Chair of the Guiding Committee, Pawanka Fund
45. Nun Sokunthea, President, Cambodia Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA)
46. Oscar Aguilar, Development Director, Pawanka Fund
47. Dr. Patricia Mupeta-Muyamwa, Human Rights in Conservation Director, Equitable Conservation Team, The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

48. Paul Edonga, Founder & Executive Director, National Programme, Save Beisa Oryx IP&LC Community Trust-SBOC; Member of WCS High Ambition Fund IP&LC Advisory Committee *(Online Participant)*
49. Soo Young Hwang, Legal Officer, United Nations Environment Program
50. Steven Smith (Owl), Ramapough Citizen, Ramapough Lenape
51. Dr. Suraj Yengde, Harvard Scholar on Caste and Race
52. Sushil Raj, Executive Director, Rights + Communities, WCS
53. Vivek Maru, Founder and CEO, Namati
54. Vatosoa Rakotondrazafy, President of the Board, Madagascar's Locally Managed Marine Areas Network (MIHARI); Member of WCS High Ambition Fund IP&LC Advisory Committee
55. Dr. Youssef Mahmoud, Senior Adviser, International Peace Institute and former UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Under-Secretary General *(Online Participant)*
56. Yun Mane, Executive Director, Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Organization (CIPO)