

## **Views on the purpose, content and structure of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform**

**Submission by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to UNFCCC**

*This submission has been provided in response to the UNFCCC call for submissions on ‘the local communities and indigenous peoples platform’.*

IUCN welcomes the clear recognition within the UNFCCC of the need to strengthen the knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples (LCIP) related to addressing and responding to climate change, including its decision at COP21 to establish a platform for the exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner in this regard.

Following the deliberations on this issue at COP22, IUCN also welcomes the opportunity to share its views on the purpose, content and structure of this LCIP Platform.

We recall that the Paris Agreement clearly acknowledged that Parties should respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, when taking action to address climate change.

Calling for the respect and support of indigenous peoples rights has long been a prominent feature of IUCN’s work and policies. In 2008, IUCN endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007. More recently, at the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress, its nearly 1400 State, government agency and civil society members adopted several resolutions related to LCIP issues, and their role in conserving and sustainably managing the world’s natural environment. This included, notably, creating a new category of membership for indigenous peoples organizations within IUCN’s institutional structure.

In the context of climate change, in particular, it is clear that local communities and indigenous peoples have an important contribution to make. Recent research, for instance, suggests that about a quarter of the carbon stored above ground in the world’s tropical forests is presently found in the collectively-managed territories of indigenous peoples and local communities. Yet despite being custodians of these, and other important, natural resources – which offer practical and cost-effective nature-based solutions for climate change – the role, knowledge,

contributions and rights of LCIPs often remain insufficiently recognized. Moreover, local communities and indigenous peoples are often the ones that are most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, and most overlooked in this regard. It is crucial, therefore, that countries adequately embrace the role that LCIPs can play in local-, national- and international-level mitigation and adaptation actions, and also take their concerns and interests into account.

The development of the LCIP Platform is an important step in this regard. Once operational, we hope that the platform will enable a more effective sharing of LCIP experiences and practices on mitigation and adaptation, which countries, communities and other actors can draw upon and benefit from while developing and implementing their climate change strategies, plans, contributions and actions. In doing so, our expectation is that the platform will also contribute to better-informed policymaking and decision-making across all levels. However, in developing this platform, it will be important to ensure that the sharing of the knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities is done with the full consent of LCIP knowledge holders, and is respectful of the cultural norms associated with such knowledge.

On the whole, IUCN supports the proposed incremental approach adopted by the COP for developing this platform, with a view to ensuring its effective operationalization. We also welcome the convening of the multi-stakeholder dialogue in this regard in conjunction with SB-46, and look forward to participating in it.

IUCN's views on the purpose, content and structure of the LCIP Platform are elaborated further below.

#### 1. Purpose:

In our view, the LCIP Platform will be well positioned to facilitate the increased and more systematic engagement of LCIPs within relevant UNFCCC processes by providing formal opportunities and spaces for disseminating and sharing their diverse practices, experiences and perspectives in relation to climate change. This will, we hope, will lead to more well-informed and effective and equitable climate-related decisions and actions at the local, national and international levels. The LCIP Platform will also provide a distinctive opportunity to facilitate holistic approaches to climate-related issues. It will also help to promote and strengthen the respect of LCIP rights as acknowledged in the Paris Agreement, and help to build LCIP capacities to effectively engage in relevant UNFCCC and other climate-related processes at the national and sub-national levels. The LCIP Platform can also help to foster dialogue and understanding, and promote practical partnerships. Given the various other international processes where LCIP

knowledge, experiences and practices on ecosystem management and biodiversity conservation are discussed, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), it can help to coordinate with such processes to enhance synergies on issues of common interest. The platform could also play an effective role in convening LCIP representatives, organizations and experts at UNFCCC COP and subsidiary body sessions.

## 2. Content:

As specified in Decision 1/CP.21, Para 135, the core content of the LCIP Platform is meant to be the experiences and best practices of indigenous peoples and local communities on climate change mitigation and adaptation; these would include relevant aspects of knowledge and technologies as well as of the customary systems under which such experiences and practices are developed.

In identifying and sharing knowledge about their experiences and practices, attention should be given, in our view, to gender-differentiated roles, since, for example, water management and harvesting of forest products are often in the hands of women, while other forestry and agricultural practices may be in the hands of men.

It would also be fundamental to learn more about the governance dimensions of such experiences and practices, especially to identify their role in enabling or otherwise hampering successful adaptation and mitigation outcomes. For example, the critical function of pastoral peoples' mobility in successfully adapting to climate variability can be severely affected by governance decisions that alter the customary patterns of land tenure and resource use in large and multi-user landscapes.

Important experience has also been accumulated on the development and application of safeguards for REDD+ and other mitigation and adaptation measures; this is an important field where sharing experiences and lessons from LCIP perspectives would be very valuable. Similarly, experiences and best practices on models of benefit-sharing involving LCIPs would be a very useful area where the platform could make a valuable contribution. Considering that LCIP adaptation will typically need to occur in landscapes, there is an opportunity also to consider how indigenous peoples' and community-based protected areas and conserved areas could offer cornerstones for building successful resilience strategies, in addition to their carbon storage, biodiversity conservation, and other environmental service and livelihood provision functions.

Given that indigenous peoples and rural communities are for the most part heavily reliant on natural resources, the platform may also be well positioned to facilitate sharing of knowledge on the interaction of natural and social science, systems of natural resource governance, ecosystem-specific conservation strategies, and national policy making on climate change – and how the inter-linkages between these could be improved.

### 3. Structure:

The LCIP Platform will likely be effective and meaningful only if it is adequately structured, supported, resourced and facilitated. While there might be different options for configuring the structure and providing these supporting mechanisms, key elements – such as the role of the UNFCCC secretariat and the commitments of Parties in providing the necessary support – will play a vital role in determining the effectiveness of this platform. It will also be important to clarify how the LCIP Platform relates to other bodies, processes and initiatives of the UNFCCC that currently engage on LCIP-related issues, and ensure that it is structured in a way that allows for its functioning in an effective and streamlined manner.

A web-based platform for knowledge exchange where indigenous peoples, local communities and other actors can freely exchange information, experiences and lessons could also be a key element of the platform.

As an international environmental organisation that is knowledge and science-based, and supportive of LCIP rights, IUCN welcomes the work being done in the development of this platform, and looks forward to continue remaining engaged on this issue.