

From: Mt Everest Forest Botanicals Alliance [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, September 28, 2024 4:35 AM
To: A6.4mechanism-info <A6.4mechanism-info@unfccc.int>
Subject: SBM 014 Annotated Agenda and Related Annexes

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Dear Supervisory Body,

I am writing on behalf of the Mount Everest Forest Botanicals Alliance (MEFBA), a national coalition representing 252 Forest and Farm Producer Organizations (FFPOs) and 1257 Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs), composed of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and Local Communities (LCs) from Central and Eastern Nepal. As CEO of MEFBA, I would like to address a critical gap in the current framework of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, particularly concerning Indigenous sovereignty and the rights of Indigenous Peoples under international law.

Indigenous Sovereignty and Article 6

Indigenous Nations, as sovereign entities, hold internationally recognized rights under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007). Specifically, Articles 20, 21, 23, and 26 establish our right to freely pursue economic development, own and control our lands, and decide how our resources, territories, and environmental outcomes are managed. This includes the right to trade mitigation outcomes or to abstain from trading, as we are the rightful custodians of the lands where carbon sequestration and other mitigation activities occur.

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement does not currently reflect or respect these inherent rights. It risks marginalizing Indigenous Nations, who are pivotal in addressing the climate crisis. Urgent reform is required to integrate Indigenous sovereignty into the Article 6 framework. Indigenous Peoples should not need government letters or other permissions to engage in carbon trading or mitigation activities. These activities occur on lands legally owned and managed by us, the Indigenous Peoples.

TerraMrida Agroforestry Biocarbon Project: A Case Study

In Eastern Nepal, we are currently implementing the TerraMrida Agroforestry Biocarbon Project on Indigenous-inhabited lands covering thousands of hectares of degraded and abandoned farmlands. This community-led initiative focuses on climate resilience and adaptation through afforestation and reforestation (ARR) activities, with millions of trees planted in coffee-based agroforestry systems. These trees are being planted on degraded private farmlands legally owned by Indigenous and Local Communities, without any external financial support, including Official Development Assistance (ODA).

However, under the current Article 6 arrangement, we face an impractical and unjust requirement of obtaining a letter from the government to participate in carbon markets. Our government has no direct involvement in these projects, and there are currently no policies in place to issue such a letter. The lack of this letter disqualifies us from potential carbon finance opportunities under the current voluntary carbon market (VCM), placing us at a significant disadvantage despite our independent efforts. This requirement fails to recognize our sovereignty and autonomy over our lands and resources and serves as a hindrance to climate justice.

Urgent Call for Reform

We urge the supervisory body of the Paris Agreement to urgently address this discrepancy by:

- Recognizing Indigenous Peoples as sovereign actors with the right to directly engage in, or abstain from, carbon markets and mitigation activities without needing government-issued letters.
- Including Indigenous sovereignty explicitly in the Human Rights Addendum to ensure that the rights under UNDRIP are respected in Article 6 mechanisms.
- Acknowledging the role of Indigenous-led initiatives, such as the TerraMrida Agroforestry Biocarbon Project, in addressing the climate crisis and promoting sustainability without external assistance.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We hope that this input will be considered in the ongoing discussions regarding Article 6, and that the voices of Indigenous Peoples will be fully recognized and respected in all aspects of the Paris Agreement.

Sincerely,
Rijul Bhaskar Gurung
CEO, Mount Everest Forest Botanicals Alliance (MEFBA)