



Indigenous Peoples: Authorities and ancestral knowledge holders in nature protection

**Bogotá
2, 3 and 4 July 2024**

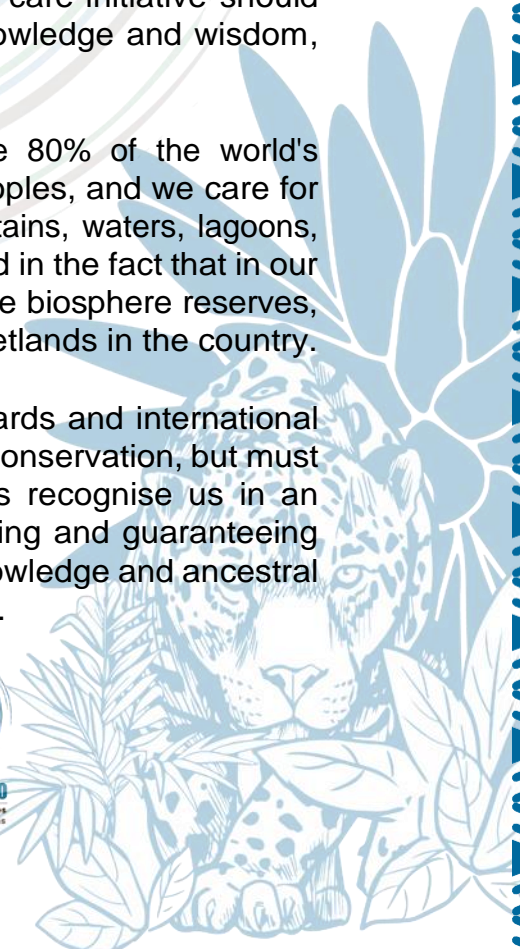
The Indigenous Peoples and organisations that are part of the National Commission of Indigenous Territories (CNTI) issue this public communication:

We gathered here together on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of July in the city of Bogotá to share our knowledge and experiences of territorial struggles, and to exchange information on the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

As Indigenous peoples, ancestral authorities and as holders of knowledge on the protection of nature governed by our Law of Origin, Ancient Law, Natural Law and Customary Law, we reaffirm that we are custodians of all expressions of life. That is why we consider that no care initiative should take place without the network of our traditional knowledge and wisdom, and without our active participation.

We, the Indigenous Peoples of the world, preserve 80% of the world's biodiversity. In Colombia, we are 115 Indigenous Peoples, and we care for forests, seas, upland moorlands, snow-capped mountains, waters, lagoons, rivers, jungles, deserts and savannas. This is reflected in the fact that in our territories we maintain 49% of the forests, 4.4% of the biosphere reserves, 11.13% of the moorlands and 12% of the Ramsar wetlands in the country.

Consequently, national laws, regulations and standards and international agreements should not only focus on environmental conservation, but must also ensure that all (environmental) care strategies recognise us in an integral way as fundamental actors, always respecting and guaranteeing our territorial and biocultural rights, as well as our knowledge and ancestral practices based on autonomy and self-determination.



Territory and biodiversity are one. Both are deeply linked with our ancestral knowledge and our networks of traditional knowledge. Indigenous Peoples reaffirm our autonomy and exercises in governance as a political and cultural reality, which are fundamental for the care of nature and its biological diversity.

Our knowledge is rooted in our relationship with our territories and in the cultural practices of women, men, youth, grandfathers, grandmothers, spiritual leaders and traditional authorities. This knowledge is transmitted intergenerationally for the care and protection of our territories and of all life forms, ensuring the continuation and renewal of our ancestral practices.

The Colombian state has a responsibility to address and remedy gaps with regard to national frameworks for respecting, guaranteeing and protecting our territorial rights of traditional and ancestral possession and occupation, as well as our rights to property and autonomy. A major effort to recognise territorial rights poses significant challenges, but if addressed then this would be and a valuable contribution by the state to the achievement of global targets to tackle to the climate crisis and biodiversity loss.

We, the Indigenous Peoples of Colombia, are aware of the historical environmental crisis caused by the extractive and capital accumulation model. This model has resulted in biodiversity loss, climate change, desertification and the systematic violation of human rights.

From our ancestral knowledge, cultural diversity and diverse systems of thought, we have long warned about the destruction of nature. As indigenous Peoples, we continue on this path and continue to work in a co-responsible and committed manner to care for and protect our Mother Earth, as we have done for millennia.

We call on our brothers and sisters and peoples of the world to unite from our diverse and just struggles under a common global agenda to defend and reaffirm our territories and autonomies. We believe that this is the most effective way to care for biodiversity and promote genuine climate action at the global level.

We, Indigenous Peoples, demand the effective enjoyment of our rights based on the plural and democratic character of the State. We publicly warn of the urgent need to ensure our participation in the decisions, strategies and measures that seek to advance global commitments.



We request that the Colombian government consolidate and unify negotiations under the climate change and biodiversity Conventions. We further urge that negotiations and (related) strategies for the care of life ensure participation of our networks and recognise and guarantee respect for our ancestral knowledge and wisdom, grounded in our rights to autonomy and self-determination.

We demand that the Colombian government take immediate and effective measures to guarantee the safety and protection of Indigenous Peoples, leaders and authorities who defend territories and nature in Colombia. In the face of the constant wave of threats and assassinations, it is imperative that concrete actions be implemented to ensure physical integrity and respect for collective territorial rights. To defend territories and the environment is to defend life in all its expressions.

We demand that States Parties (of the CBD) implement transparent and effective mechanisms that ensure direct access to economic resources for the care of nature, and allow for their equitable distribution and autonomous administration. It is crucial that Indigenous Peoples are directly involved in the management of these funds, to ensure that their allocation and use is harmonised with our specific needs and traditional ways of life. This involvement will ensure that resources are used in ways that truly support and recognise the contributions of Indigenous Peoples and our territories to the care of life.

We demand that the Colombian government recognise, support and guarantee the active participation of Indigenous Peoples in all stages of decision-making that directly impact our territories and cultural practices. This commitment must be reflected in concrete policies and actions that respect and promote our autonomy and territorial rights.

