

**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
KEY MESSAGES TO THE XIV WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS
Durban, 7-11 September 2015**



Indigenous Communities are Key to Sustainable Forest Management

INTRODUCTION

Close to 1 billion people rely on forests resources for their livelihoods, of which it is estimated 60 million are indigenous peoples. The indigenous peoples hold the vital knowledge of generations on how to live with nature and be in balance and harmony with the natural world. As one Batwa (DRC) says “I know the forest and the forest knows me”.

The traditional culture and way of life of Indigenous peoples are intertwined with the forest ecosystem and demands that they utilize the forest in a sustainable manner as a sacred obligation to bequeath a healthy forest fully capable of providing life to its human inhabitants to future generations. This has resulted in the protection of watersheds, prevention of soil erosions and provision of livelihoods for communities, thus contributing to sustainable development.

Threats to their forest and livelihood include logging, and other extractive activities that has led to deforestation, soil degradation and erosion that also has impacted on water catchment areas. Other threats caused by the wood-based industry, especially monoculture plantations and GMOs to forests and communities, and communities ability to conserve forests.

Today we are faced with harsh impacts of climate change with seasons shifting, temperatures rising and sea levels rising at alarming rates. Indigenous peoples have traditional knowledge that helps them adapt and are constantly evolving the knowledge.

As we move towards a new development agenda, Indigenous peoples must not be left behind. This year as the World meets for the World Forestry Congress to build strong messages, we must ensure a strong framework for sustainable forests that includes indigenous peoples in the decision-making process. It is crucial to fully and effectively implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which provides a framework for indigenous peoples’ rights to forests and recognizes the right to make decisions and to be involved in the decision making process.

SECURING TENURE AND ENABLING POLICIES

Indigenous peoples lack security of tenure to their forest in most parts of Africa. In most cases they do not have legislation that respects their right to use and access forest resources. Where policies exist, enforcement is still lacking. This has resulted in great loss of biodiversity and their traditional land tenure rights are in conflict with development agendas. In some countries indigenous communities have been given legal rights to forest areas.

Key messages

- Policies to secure tenure over indigenous peoples lands , territories and forest resources
- Call to actions to ensure Indigenous peoples are allowed to manage their forests in a sustainable manner
- Respect for traditional knowledge as source of knowledge to enrich global knowledge and the understanding of sustainable forest management.
- We want policy makers to support community conservation in policies
- We want policy makers to stop promoting monoculture plantations

ORGANISATION STRENGTHENING

Indigenous peoples organizations are structured

Key messages

- Recognition and support of indigenous led community organizations and traditional institutions as decision making bodies
- To get support for Community Conservation as an effective means for forest conservation in policies

INCLUSION OF WOMEN AND YOUTH IN FORESTRY

Indigenous women are traditional knowledge banks and are tasked with passing knowledge from one generation to another. The youth are crucial for the continuation of the practices of conserving the forest and its sustainable utilization as future generations. However, their engagement in forestry programmes and policy discussions has not been appreciated and supported.

Key messages

- Recognition of the role of women and youth in forest conservation and respect for indigenous women's rights
- Support to women and youth initiatives and ensuring their full and effective participation