



International
Labour
Organization

ILO Submission to the UNFCCC in relation to the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has dedicated standards, strategies and programmes concerning indigenous and tribal peoples, which are an integral part of its Decent Work Agenda. It recognizes that indigenous peoples' knowledge is fundamental for combating climate change, and that indigenous women and men, and their communities are critical agents of change for effective climate action and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The ILO therefore welcomes the efforts towards operationalizing the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform.

The ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)¹ is the only international treaty open for ratification that is exclusively dedicated to addressing indigenous peoples' issues. At the same time, the ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all² have emerged as an important framework for addressing the threats faced by people and communities from climate change. Furthermore, the ILO's 2015 Strategy for action concerning indigenous and tribal peoples places the protection of indigenous peoples' rights in the context of inclusive and sustainable development, while also stressing on the linkages to environmental protection.³ More generally, the Decent Work Agenda, which is underpinned by the broader body of ILO Conventions and Recommendations, has been playing a critical role in empowering indigenous women and men, and ensuring that indigenous peoples' traditional occupations and knowledge are protected and can thrive.

The ILO Convention No. 169 regarding indigenous peoples' traditional activities and technologies explicitly states in Article 23, *"1. Handicrafts, rural and community-based industries, and subsistence economy and **traditional activities of the peoples concerned**, such as hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering, shall be recognised as important factors in the maintenance of their cultures and in their economic self-reliance and development. Governments shall, with the participation of these people and whenever appropriate, ensure that these activities are strengthened and promoted. 2. Upon the request of the peoples concerned, appropriate technical and financial assistance shall be provided wherever possible, **taking into account the traditional technologies** and cultural characteristics of these peoples, as well as the importance of sustainable and equitable development."* The Convention in Article 27 further states, *"1. Education programmes and services for the peoples concerned shall be developed and implemented in co-operation with them to address their special needs, and **shall incorporate their histories, their knowledge and technologies, their value systems and their further social, economic and cultural aspirations.**"*

A forthcoming report by the ILO, and a technical note prepared by the ILO for COP22,⁴ have stressed the importance of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge for climate action. It is highlighted that indigenous peoples face a range of threats from climate change as well as climate action that excludes them, including regarding, poverty and inequality; erosion of natural resource-based livelihoods;

¹ Full text of Convention No. 169 available at:

http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=normlexpub:12100:0::no::p12100_instrument_id:312314

² Full text of the Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all

available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_432859.pdf

³ The strategy is available at www.ilo.org/indigenous

⁴ See ILO: *Technical Paper: Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change: From Victims to Change Agents through Decent Work* (2016). Forthcoming report: ILO: *Indigenous peoples and climate change: From Victims to Change Agents through Decent Work* (2017).

residence in geographical areas exposed to climate change; migration and forced displacement; gender inequality; and lack of recognition, rights, institutional support and inclusion in public policies. However, it is also emphasized that as powerful agents of change, indigenous peoples have a fundamental role to play for climate action to be effective and strong, particularly given that indigenous peoples share a complex cultural and sustainable relationship with natural resources and ecosystems on which they depend, and are at the vanguard of running a modern economic model based on the principles of a sustainable green economy; as well as the exceptional nature of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge and cultural approaches which are of high relevance and value for climate mitigation and adaptation.

Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge and ways of life are closely intertwined with the world of work. From traditional occupations or subsistence activities dependent on lands, forests and natural resources such as agriculture, hunting-gather, among others, to activities related to formal enterprises such as cooperatives, including with regard to ecotourism, natural resource management, handicrafts production, among others, indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge, and the world of work, reinforce each other. Consequently, indigenous peoples' access to lands and natural resources, livelihoods and employment opportunities, decent working conditions, social protection, and access to training and services are critical for protecting traditional occupations and knowledge, as well as ensuring that these can thrive and be further innovated upon, and serve as a foundation for generating sustainable sources of income, green jobs and enterprises, and in turn, for empowering indigenous women and men. In this regard, the Decent Work Agenda, including Convention No. 169, provide important guidance for addressing the vulnerabilities that indigenous women and men face in the world of work, including from climate change, and for ensuring that, as agents of change, they can contribute to achieving sustainable development and combating climate change.

With a wealth of traditional knowledge and practices, indigenous peoples have an instrumental role to play in achieving the following goals. Without their meaningful participation, knowledge and practices, effective climate action and sustainable development cannot be achieved:

- Ensuring biodiversity conservation and the sustainable management of natural resources such as forests or marine resources
- Enhancing sustainable agricultural practices and food security
- Enhancing sustainable livelihoods, creating green jobs and spurring climate-sensitive innovation, entrepreneurship and businesses
- Achieving gender equality and facilitating the increased participation of women in decision-making and natural resource management, among other areas
- Raising productivity and economic growth while taking into account environmental considerations
- Securing peaceful, stable and resilient societies necessary for inclusive social and economic development
- Establishing strong mechanisms for monitoring and accountability to ensure that no one is left behind

The ILO would like to propose the following considerations for the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform:

1. The Platform should engage with the world of work issues faced by indigenous peoples that are closely intertwined with their traditional knowledge and occupations.
2. The open multi-stakeholder dialogue should include the ILO as an interlocutor, particularly regarding the world of work issues, Decent Work Agenda and ILO Convention No. 169, the only international treaty open for ratification that is exclusively dedicated to addressing indigenous peoples' issues.

The ILO stands ready to contribute actively in operationalizing the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform.