

Title

Unequivocally recognize and effectively support the crucial conservation role of territories of life and their custodians: TRUTH and RECONCILIATION (1/3)

Preamble

KNOWING that **territories of life** comprise lands, waters and the gifts of Nature governed, managed and conserved collectively by their **custodians**— Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant and local communities, settled and mobile, who have **multiple links** of historical interaction with their territories, including knowledge, work, sustenance, identity, art, culture, economy, defence, sacrifice, responsibility and continuous care;

KNOWING that, when adequately recognized and supported, territories of life **can alone meet targets 1, 2 and 3 of the KM-GBF**;

KNOWING that the biological diversity of territories of life is linked to the **diversity of languages, cultures and living knowledge systems** of their custodians— essential for sustainable use and restoration;

KNOWING that territories of life provide **livelihoods** for their custodians and **ecological and climate regulating functions** for everyone;

KNOWING that territories of life are governed under **diverse socio-political arrangements**— from indigenous customary rights to traditional commons, sacred sites or collective property— and are **often affected and degraded** by unsustainable development policies and aggressive practices of extractivism, agro-industry, urbanism, as well as by growing socio-economic inequality, and ecological and cultural change;

WELCOMING the United Nations Declarations UNDRIP 2007 and UNDROP 2018 and the obligations of Parties to the CBD under Article 8j, the Programme of Work on Protected Areas and the KM-GBF;

RECOGNIZING the efforts of some governments to implement the CBD Decisions and IUCN World Parks Congresses recommendations relating to diversity, quality and vitality of governance and Indigenous and traditional cultures;

BUILDING UPON the **various IUCN Resolutions** related to Indigenous Peoples and local communities' role in conservation that were previously approved albeit always **implemented in a limited manner**;

Operational Section

The IUCN World Congress in Abu Dhabi (UAE) **URGES the Director General to:**

- **Unequivocally affirm the undeferrable role of the territories of life and their custodians** in ensuring that future generations inherit a diverse, just and liveable world;
- Recognize unequivocally that territories of life and their custodians exemplify centuries of **vitality of governance of bioculturally diverse landscapes** before and beyond state or private protected areas, but always received **less attention, recognition and support**;
- Emphasize that any effective conservation regime includes **restorative justice** so that custodians maintain or resume their responsibility to govern, manage and conserve their territories of life for their own benefit and the benefit of all, which is possible by following

country-specific legislation and policies and **also in the culture-specific ways that custodians deem appropriate**;

- **Begin a process of “truth and reconciliation”** recognizing the persistence and reproduction of colonial dynamics, including forced eviction and sedentarization for “conservation aims”, and the impacts on territories of life by land and water grabbing, extractivism, polluting development, ecologically-damaging infrastructure, speculation, deception and violent changes that have altered, alienated, fragmented, militarized and commodified significant parts of the lands, waters and gifts of Nature.

Sponsors and co-sponsors

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Explanatory memorandum

KM-GBF = Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
UNDRIP = United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNDROP = United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas
CBD = Convention on Biological Diversity

Several peer-reviewed reports and papers describe the conservation and restoration benefits of living territories, for example:

[ipbes_global_assessment_report_summary_for_policymakers_es.pdf](#)

[informe_restauracion_ecologica.pdf](#)

[The state of Indigenous Peoples' and Local Communities' lands and territories | IUCN ICCA-Territories-of-Life-2021-Report-FULL-150dpi-ESP.pdf](#); report.territoriesoflife.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ICCA-Territories-of-Life-2021-Report-FULL-150dpi-ENG.pdf;

See also: Element 2 (Governance, Participation, Equity and Benefit Sharing) of the Program of Work on Protected Areas. (CDB 2004), [ProtectedAreas-text-es-3.qxp](#); Accord and Action Plan agreed at the 2003 World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa; and from the 2014 World Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia, the recommendations on the diversity, quality and

vitality of governance and the cultural and spiritual values that inform and support the conservation of Nature, Rep-2015-005-Es.pdf;

Key Resolutions approved by IUCN in the past include: [GA 1975 RES 005 Protection of traditional ways of life](#); [GA 2004 RES 3.049 Community Conserved Areas](#); [GA 2008 RES 4.055 Integrating culture and cultural diversity](#); [GA 2008 RES 4.049 Supporting Indigenous Conservation Territories and ICCAs](#); [GA 2012 RES 5.094 Respecting, recognizing and supporting ICCAs](#); [GA 2016 RES 6.030 Recognising and respecting ICCAs overlapped by protected areas](#); [GA 2012 RES 77 Promoting Locally Managed Marine Areas](#); [GA 2016 Res 033 Recognising cultural and spiritual significance of nature](#); [GA 2020 RES 118 Recognising and supporting indigenous Peoples' and local communities' rights and roles in conservation](#); https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/resrecfiles/WCC_2012_RES_77_EN.pdf; https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/resrecfiles/WCC_2020_RES_118_EN.pdf

A. IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

Execution budget

Beginning a “truth and reconciliation” process could be done with a basic budget of around 100,000 dólares per year provided the IUCN makes its technical capacities and structures available. If the political will exists, it would be easy to find the financial budget to support this truth and reconciliation process for the actors who directly conserve Nature.

Explanatory memorandum

Territories of life - a term originally used and popularized by the Indigenous Peoples of Colombia - is now largely adopted in place of the acronyms/abbreviations 'CCA' and 'ICCAs' used by many, including IUCN and its Members, since the 2003 World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa. Others also use it to describe Indigenous Conservation Territories, 'commons' governed by local communities in Europe, and coastal and marine territories such as Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs). In local languages the terms include, among many others: 'agdal, ahupua'a, ancestral domain, self-governing territory, biens communaux, commons, communal forest, community conserved area, consortage, conservancy, country, dùthchas, ejido, 'endim ang', 'naniorr', fokonolona, forest commons, hima, houroum, kaya, Kawsak Sacha, 'jal, jungaal aur jameen', locally-managed marine area, Nunangat, peace park, proprietà collettiva, qoroq-e bumi, regole, sacred natural site, sato-umi, sato-yama, section de commune, tagal, tana'ulen, territorio autónomo comunitario, yerli qorukh, università agraria, and wilayah adat.

The ICCA Consortium has listed **three defining characteristics of territories of life**: 1) a close and deep connection between a territory and its custodian indigenous people or community; 2) the custodian is able to develop and enforce rules over the territory (has a well-functioning governance institution); and 3) the custodian's rules and efforts contribute positively to nature conservation and community livelihoods and well-being. These characteristics vary by context and region. Some trustees use the terms 'defined' territories of life when all three characteristics are fully satisfied and 'disturbed' territories of life for those that satisfied them in the past but do not today due to historical changes and disturbances that can still be reversed or counteracted. The term 'desired' territories of life is sometimes used for those that have not yet satisfied all three characteristics, but could develop them today, as some communities are poised to act as custodians (Sajeva et al., 2019).

'Territory of life' and 'custodians' are interdependent concepts, i.e., a territory of life sustains the livelihoods and identity of a custodian indigenous people or community, and a custodian indigenous people or community cares for (governs, manages and conserves) a

territory of life. Custodianship is closely related to identity, autonomy and social morality (Borrini-Feyerabend, 2024). For some, the custodians are an *integral part* of their territories of life, as it makes no sense to separate people from Nature.

The term **territory** represents a combination of ecological, historical, cultural, political and social values along with, and far beyond, the economic values it also includes. A territory is a cultural land/seascape: for the people or community that custodies it, it merges with life and the meaning of life, and is uniquely linked to a collective past and a desired shared future, rejecting the separation between nature and people. Beyond legal ownership, a territory may encompass lands owned in common, owned by community members or others, and/or lands owned by the State, within or outside protected areas, and even related to diverse legal jurisdictions and countries.