

094 Recognising the importance of Indigenous [and local] languages, knowledge and cultural heritage in biodiversity conservation

[General comment from facilitator .. there is a question, possibly something to be considered at the level of all motions, regarding the terminology (including capitalisation) of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.]

NOTING that, of the 7,168 languages spoken globally, over 4,000 are Indigenous, spoken by less than 6% of the world's population, and only a few hundred languages hold official status, with projections suggesting that 50–90% of languages could disappear by 2100;

OBSERVING that Indigenous [peoples'] [and local] languages are essential to the preservation and transmission of the ecological knowledge, sciences and practices of Indigenous peoples [and Local communities], and decision support vital for biodiversity conservation;

RECOGNISING the deep interconnection between culture, language, nature and conservation, and that Indigenous peoples and Local communities have been at the forefront of managing and conserving biodiversity through their traditional knowledge systems and sustainable practices;

ALSO RECOGNISING the central role of Indigenous and local women, in maintaining, using and transmitting Indigenous and local languages and traditional ecological knowledge across generations, and the need for gender-responsive approaches to language preservation and biodiversity conservation;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms Indigenous peoples' rights to revitalise, use and teach their cultures and traditions, including their languages;

RECALLING that the International Labour Organization Convention 169 recognises the crucial role of Indigenous peoples in biodiversity conservation and mandates that States take measures to protect and promote Indigenous languages and knowledge systems;

[FURTHER RECALLING the Convention on Biological Diversity, especially Article 8(j) and related provisions, the Plan of Action on Customary Sustainable Use, and the Nagoya Protocol, which stress that the knowledge of Indigenous peoples and Local communities is vital for biodiversity conservation and the sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystems, [and that the use and transmission of this knowledge is done with the involvement of Indigenous peoples and Local communities] [and the need to respect the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of Indigenous peoples (as set out in UNDRIP) regarding the use and transmission of this knowledge] [, as appropriate];]

[OR]

[FURTHER RECALLING Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, to respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of Indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilisation of such knowledge, innovations and practices;]

ALARMED that the loss of Indigenous and local languages and Indigenous knowledge, sciences and practices, driven by colonisation and acculturation, threatens biodiversity by marginalising Indigenous peoples and Local communities [, including by replacing their ecological understanding with often incomplete scientific nomenclature];

APPRECIATING the increasing participation of Indigenous peoples and Local communities in global conservation governance, supported by IUCN resolutions, and the efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and other bodies, to safeguard cultural heritage, including the languages, traditional knowledge, and the role of Indigenous peoples and Local communities in biodiversity conservation;

COMMENDING the Convention on Biological Diversity for the establishment of the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) and other provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity; and

ALSO COMMENDING the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy, the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management and the IUCN Species Survival Commission for global engagement in 50 languages through online platforms;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, at its session in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates:

1. REQUESTS the Director General to:

a. promote State involvement in protection of Indigenous and local languages, through their formal recognition in legal frameworks;

b. facilitate equitable, gender-responsive and culturally respectful cooperation between Indigenous peoples and Local communities, and governments, for the promotion and preservation of languages;

c. collaborate on and support Indigenous peoples' and Local communities' initiatives for language preservation and intergenerational transmission, including field and community schools or learning centres, ensuring their full ownership, and recognising the essential role of women in language transmission and intergenerational knowledge sharing;

d. establish grants to support Indigenous and local language preservation; and

e. support Indigenous and community, women-led initiatives that strengthen language use and ecological knowledge transmission in homes, communities, and cultural practices;

2. CALLS ON Members to support Indigenous and community-led monitoring of Indigenous and local languages, with the free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of Indigenous peoples [where relevant], report findings and take steps to preserve the biodiversity knowledge they carry;

3. INVITES IUCN to establish a task force, [led by its IPO Members,] to protect and promote Indigenous [and local] languages and ensure that Indigenous peoples and Local communities can share their knowledge through accessible technologies, with full respect for Indigenous data sovereignty and the principle of FPIC;

4. URGES governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and conservation stakeholders to promote the respectful use of Indigenous peoples' knowledge, sciences and practices, languages and normative systems, [including] by recognising their heritage value, ensuring the full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples [and full respect for] [based on] the principle of FPIC, avoiding appropriation and misrepresentation, and supporting projects integrating Indigenous and local languages, particularly species and ecosystem names, to complement taxonomy and conservation programmes;

5. RECOMMENDS promotion of the value of Indigenous peoples' and Local communities' knowledge systems as an integral part of global conservation frameworks, with the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous peoples, and ensuring they are valued and communicated through relevant visual formats to facilitate wider understanding and decision-making; and

6. CALLS ON IUCN to collaborate with UNESCO, CBD and IPBES in promoting the value of the knowledge, sciences and practices of Indigenous peoples and local communities as an integral part of global conservation frameworks, ensuring they are valued equally alongside scientific research, and to recognise the importance of Indigenous and local languages in global understanding, and to support their use, along with visual tools to enhance accessibility and comprehension of scientific findings and policy recommendations.