

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

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 communities' (IPLCs) languages are essential to the preservation and transmission of traditional ecological knowledge and decision support vital for biodiversity conservation;

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

ACKNOWLEDGING that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms Indigenous peoples' rights to their cultures, including their languages, and their right to revitalise, use and transmit them to future generations;

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 that the Convention on Biological Diversity, especially Article 8j and related provisions and the Plan of Action on Customary Sustainable Use, and the Nagoya Protocol, which stress that IPLC knowledge is vital for biodiversity conservation and the sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystems and that the use and transmission of this knowledge, need to respect the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of the IPLCs;

ALARMED that the loss of Indigenous languages and traditional knowledge, driven by colonisation and acculturation threatens biodiversity by marginalising IPLCs and replacing their ecological understanding with often incomplete scientific nomenclature;

APPRECIATING the increasing participation of IPLCs 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 languages, traditional knowledge, and the role of IPLCs in biodiversity conservation; and

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 languages through the formal recognition in legal frameworks;
- b. facilitate cooperation between Indigenous peoples and governments for promotion and preservation of languages;
- c. collaborate with and support Indigenous Peoples' initiatives for language preservation and inter-generational transmission, including field and community schools or learning centres, ensuring their full ownership; and
- d. establish grants to support Indigenous language preservation;

2. CALLS ON Members to monitor Indigenous languages, report findings and take steps to preserve the biodiversity knowledge they carry;
3. INVITES IUCN to establish a task force to protect and promote Indigenous languages and ensure IPLCs can share their knowledge through accessible technologies;
4. URGES governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and conservation stakeholders to integrate IPLC traditional knowledge, languages and normative systems by recognising their heritage value, ensuring participation based on FPIC, and supporting projects integrating Indigenous languages, particularly species and ecosystem names to complement taxonomy and conservation programmes;
5. RECOMMENDS integration of IPLC knowledge systems into global conservation frameworks, 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 and IPBES in integrating IPLC knowledge into global conservation frameworks, ensuring it is valued equally alongside scientific research, and recognise the importance of local languages in global understanding and support their use, along with visual tools to enhance accessibility and comprehension of scientific findings and policy recommendations.