

Submission to the COP30 Presidency Roadmap on Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030

Submitted by Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact Foundation (AIPP), Center for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North (CSIPN), Centro Indígena de Acción Integral (CIAI), Indigenous Peoples Foundation for Education and Environment (IPF), International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), Mainyoto Pastoralists Integrated Development Organisation (MPIDO), Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organizations Forum (PINGOs Forum), Ujamaa Community Resource Team (UCRT)



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André Corrêa do Lago
UNFCCC COP 30 President

**Submission to the COP30 Presidency Roadmap for Halting and Reversing
Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030**

This submission responds to the COP30 Presidency invitation to contribute to the Roadmap for Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030. Drawing on peer-reviewed literature, international human rights frameworks, and experiences from the Indigenous Peoples' movement, we address all four questions in Part II of the invitation. At the end of the submission, we present eight concrete recommendations for the Roadmap.

On behalf of the following organisations:

- **Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact Foundation (AIPP)**
- **Center for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North (CSIPN)**
- **Centro Indígena de Acción Integral (CIAI)**
- **Indigenous Peoples Foundation for Education and Environment (IPF)**
- **International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)**
- **Mainyoto Pastoralists Integrated Development Organisation (MPIDO)**
- **Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN)**
- **Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organizations Forum (PINGOs Forum)**
- **Ujamaa Community Resource Team (UCRT)**

Designated Focal Point:

Full name: Stefan Thorsell

Title: Climate Advisor

Organisation: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)

Email: st@iwgia.org

A critical note on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, which we consider important to emphasise. Indigenous Peoples are individual and collective rights-holders under international human rights standards. Throughout this submission, "Indigenous Peoples" is used as a distinct category, consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the [joint recommendations](#) of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Conflating Indigenous Peoples with "local communities" undermines their status, governance roles, and rights *as distinct Peoples*, producing misinformation, assimilationist policy design, and the erosion of those rights. This distinction is foundational to all recommendations that follow.

The following will outline our inputs to the four questions:

(a) What are the most critical barriers — whether physical, economic, financial, institutional, technological or social — preventing the halting and reversing of deforestation and forest degradation?

Indigenous Peoples play a critical role in addressing deforestation globally, yet their ability to do so is systematically undermined when their rights are not respected. The key structural barriers include:

1. Land tenure insecurity. Indigenous [lands with secure tenure function as effective deforestation barriers, whilst those lacking tenure security show variable and often insignificant effects on forest loss](#). A 2025 report found that tenure rights remain ["inadequately protected under national laws" across 35 countries, with "unprecedented levels of violence and criminalisation, displacement and land grabbing" putting prior progress at risk](#). When states fail to recognise — or actively violate — Indigenous tenure rights, they remove the institutional foundation that makes Indigenous forest stewardship effective.

2. Extractivism and development infrastructure. [Resource extraction and infrastructure development directly drive deforestation on Indigenous lands](#). Governments have actively rolled back regulations protecting Indigenous lands and conservation areas to enable extractive industries, [and Indigenous perceptions of insecurity have increased alongside documented homicides of Indigenous environmental defenders](#) - women, men and youth alike.

3. Lack of effective rights safeguards within climate finance mechanisms. International climate finance mechanisms, including REDD+, can themselves violate rights when Indigenous Peoples are treated as beneficiaries rather than rights-holders. [Undefined tenure rights negatively impact REDD+ outcomes](#), and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) within REDD+ has tended to function [as a tokenistic tool rather than a genuine instrument of self-determination](#).

4. The conflation of Indigenous Peoples with "local communities". When data, programmes, funding, and governance frameworks group Indigenous Peoples with other communities under umbrella categories, the result is misinformation, assimilationist policy

design, and the effective dilution of Indigenous Peoples' distinct legal status. Indigenous Peoples hold individual and specific, collective rights – including rights to self-determination, land, and FPIC. Frameworks that fail to make this distinction are structurally incapable of delivering the rights-based outcomes on which effective forest stewardship depends.

5. Implementation gaps. [Indigenous lands are highly effective in reducing deforestation](#)—often matching or exceeding formal protected areas—and [contain a significant share of the world's remaining intact forests, with lower loss rates](#). Yet, despite growing global recognition, the gap between commitments and on-the-ground outcomes continues to undermine these results.

(b) What potential levers, whether economic, financial, institutional, social or technological, exist for accelerating the implementation of the commitment to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation?

1. Land tenure recognition for Indigenous Peoples. Tenure formalisation is the foundational lever that enables most others. [Indigenous lands and protected areas consistently outperform private and undesignated lands in forest conservation outcomes, and privatising Indigenous lands would most likely increase deforestation](#). The Roadmap should therefore prioritise accelerated land demarcation, legal recognition of customary tenure, and robust enforcement — including effective legal remedies for territorial invasion.

2. Indigenous Peoples and their Knowledge Systems. Indigenous Peoples and their Knowledge Systems are increasingly recognised in social-ecological resilience research but remain [underutilised in restoration practice, with Indigenous Peoples typically cast as research participants rather than collaborative partners](#). [A case study from Colombia](#) illustrates the potential: communities achieved low deforestation and promoted forest regeneration when three conditions were met – legitimate environmental leadership, external partner support, and sustainable cultural values tied to the land – even in the absence of supportive state institutions.

3. Financial and economic levers. Decentralised, Indigenous-led approaches to forest conservation outperform centralised national schemes in both equity and community engagement. [In Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve](#), over 20 years of community-managed forest concessions achieved near-zero deforestation whilst supporting livelihoods, in marked contrast to high deforestation in nearby protected areas. The key design principle across all such mechanisms is that financial flows must reinforce Indigenous rights and governance.

4. Monitoring and data access. Providing Indigenous Peoples with greater access to satellite deforestation monitoring data [improves response times and reduces tree cover loss](#). Such tools should be designed to reinforce Indigenous governance systems rather than create parallel or externally managed oversight structures.

(c) What country, regional or sector experiences, best practices, and lessons learned can be shared regarding forest conservation and restoration?

The evidence for Indigenous-led conservation is compelling across regions. Indigenous-managed lands are slightly [more vertebrate species-rich than existing protected areas](#), and in countries such as Brazil and Canada, support more threatened species than protected areas or randomly selected sites. [In Australia, three-quarters of the country's 272 nationally listed threatened terrestrial vertebrate species have ranges overlapping Indigenous land](#).

A significant positive association exists between levels of Indigenous Knowledge System practice and forest conservation, with [strong spatial overlap between areas where Indigenous Peoples' knowledge is highly enacted and well-conserved ecosystems](#). Indigenous cultural practices – including rituals, taboos, and belief systems – [function as effective conservation mechanisms, creating social norms that limit resource extraction and protect ecologically important areas](#). Indigenous forest classifications and customary norms can constitute a governance system which [safeguards ecological balance whilst reinforcing cultural resilience](#), without reliance on formal state enforcement.

Collaborative approaches demonstrate the value of engaging Indigenous Peoples and their Knowledge Systems in restoration. Community-led practices – including family nurseries, seed exchange networks, and traditional cultivation systems – [have linked ecological restoration with food sovereignty and responses to structural inequality](#). Co-production approaches have also generated positive ecological and economic outcomes, including the recovery of biodiversity and carbon stocks over time.

[Lessons from protected and conserved areas suggest specific recommendations across project phases](#): (1) during site selection, guarantee FPIC and adapt technocratic concepts to Indigenous Peoples' Knowledge; (2) during implementation, develop collaborative plans and ensure fair remuneration; (3) when assessing outcomes, include Indigenous values in measuring restoration impact.

(d) How can forest conservation, sustainable management, and restoration best reflect the diverse realities of countries at different stages of development, the rights and knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, and different degrees of forest cover?

Regardless of a country's stage of development or degree of forest cover, the formalisation of Indigenous land tenure is the foundational precondition for effective forest conservation. [Indigenous Peoples' lands overlap disproportionately with remaining intact ecosystems and experience less deforestation than non-Indigenous lands](#).

In degraded or low-cover landscapes, [Indigenous Peoples and their Knowledge Systems become especially valuable for restoration](#): informing species selection, identifying reference conditions, and designing management systems that communities will sustain over time. The contributions of Indigenous Peoples and their Knowledge Systems include the construction

of reference ecosystems where historical data is absent, knowledge of historical land management, invasive species management, and post-restoration monitoring.

FPIC must be a non-negotiable procedural standard. FPIC requires engaging Indigenous Peoples as rights-holders rather than project beneficiaries, with capacity-building for effective participation. Nevertheless, [usually FPIC within REDD+ functions more as a tokenistic tool than as a genuine instrument of self-determination](#). The Roadmap must navigate this tension honestly: FPIC implementation must be substantive, not procedural, and must be grounded in Indigenous Peoples' own governance systems and timelines.

The [joint statement](#) by the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples requests that Member States, UN entities, and multilateral institutions "adopt distinctions-based policies that respect and enhance the status and rights of Indigenous Peoples" and "acknowledge Indigenous Peoples as separate from categories or terms different from their own denomination such as 'local communities', especially where their rights are concerned." This recommendation applies directly to the Roadmap: data collection, benefit-sharing arrangements, governance frameworks, and monitoring systems must be designed separately for Indigenous Peoples. As the UN Bodies further note, presenting data, information, programmes, and funding "in combination or jointly with other groups or categories" concerning Indigenous Peoples "often lead[s] to misinformation and promote[s] assimilationist approaches."

[Rights-based approaches, multi-level governance, and attention to power dynamics are essential across diverse contexts](#). The Roadmap should explicitly support Indigenous customary governance, co-management arrangements, and state forest management, whilst ensuring that Indigenous Peoples retain primary authority over their own territories, consistent with their right to self-determination.

Recommendations for the Roadmap

1. **Adopt distinctions-based language throughout the Roadmap**, clearly recognising Indigenous Peoples *as distinct peoples* and rights-holders as such, separate from other stakeholder categories.
2. **Prioritise land tenure formalisation as the highest-impact lever for halting deforestation**, with specific targets for demarcation and legal recognition of Indigenous territories.
3. **Require substantive FPIC** in all forest finance mechanisms — including REDD+, carbon and biodiversity markets, and results-based payments — with Indigenous Peoples participating as rights-holders.
4. **Design financial mechanisms to strengthen Indigenous governance**, with direct, predictable access to finance and equitable benefit-sharing arrangements negotiated under FPIC.
5. **Ethically and equitably engage Indigenous Peoples and their Knowledge Systems in restoration planning, monitoring, and evaluation**, with Indigenous Peoples as partners and decision-makers.
6. **Invest in Indigenous-led monitoring systems**, including community-managed satellite data platforms, ensuring these tools reinforce Indigenous governance.
7. **Address the implementation gap between global policy recognition and on-the-ground outcomes**, with specific accountability mechanisms for states' obligations under UNDRIP and the Paris Agreement.
8. **Adopt measures to protect Indigenous environmental defenders** — women, men, and youth — in recognition of their disproportionate vulnerability in defence of their forests.

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