

## CO-LEADS SUMMARY

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### Summary of Second Annual Gathering of Knowledge Holders

#### Background

On Monday November 7, 2022, over 100 Indigenous knowledge holders and practitioners including 32 regionally nominated knowledge holders by FWG Indigenous Peoples representatives from all seven UN-socio-cultural regions gathered during the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 27) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. This activity is a continuation from the initial two-year LCIPP Workplan (2020-2021) and is mandated under Activity 1 of the second three-year workplan (2022-2024) of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP). The LCIPP is mandated to “organize annual meetings in conjunction with the sessions of the COP, with the participation of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous knowledge holders, to expand and enhance inclusion of traditional knowledge, knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local knowledge systems in addressing and responding to climate change, consistently with rights-based international safeguards and Indigenous Peoples’ cultural protocols”.<sup>1</sup>

#### Overview

During the gathering, knowledge holders – which included Elders, youth, men, women, traditional practitioners – shared and exchanged their knowledge, teachings, understandings, and solutions to the causes and impacts of climate change that they are confronting in their homelands.

The annual gathering was designed to feature two sessions:

- Part I: Exchange amongst knowledge holders: This served as a knowledge sharing meeting for Indigenous knowledge holders, including youth, -focused on intergenerational and cross-regional knowledge-sharing and development of recommendations based on Indigenous knowledge and local knowledge, methods, lived experiences, and practices, and discussion about how and what information and recommendations will be shared in part two;

At this part of the gathering, knowledge holders shared their perspectives in in four roundtable conversations:

- Indigenous perspectives on climate change and potential solutions
- Health and well-being in relationship to culture, language and spirituality
- Understanding how Indigenous knowledge systems, and biocultural diversity stewardship has helped mitigate and adapt to climate change
- Perspectives of Indigenous youth

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<sup>1</sup> Second three-year workplan of the LCIPP (2022 – 2024), see <https://lcipp.unfccc.int/sites/default/files/2022-05/LCIPP%20second%20three%20year%20workplan.pdf>

Following a similar format to the inaugural knowledge holders gathering in 2021, each roundtable included opening comments from identified knowledge holders from all seven regions, selected in collaboration with FWG representatives, and then opened the floor to contributions from other Indigenous knowledge holders around the room. The spirit of the discussion was powerful, as each speaker shared their reflections, experiences, and emotions with everyone in the room.

- Part II: Dialogue with Parties: The second part of the gathering featured participation by knowledge holders from each of the UN Indigenous socio-cultural regions, local communities, Party representatives, international organizations, constituted bodies under the Convention, and scientific bodies. In this segment of the gathering, the knowledge holders presented knowledge-based observations and recommendations, and proposals for integrating this knowledge into climate action and policies.

Part II allowed the Indigenous Knowledge Holders to communicate the outcomes and recommendations from each of these roundtables to participating Party representatives, international organizations, and constituted bodies under the Convention. This participation included interventions from Australia, Bolivia, Canada, Columbia, Finland, Norway, and representatives from Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage, as well as the Adaptation Committee.

This summary consists of a summary of discussions under each of the roundtable during Part I and then conclude with key reflections from Party and constituted bodies in Part II.

## **Summary of Part I: Exchange amongst Knowledge Holders**

### *ROUND TABLE 1: Indigenous perspectives on climate change and potential solutions*

Key messages:

- Indigenous Peoples have experienced severe impacts by resource and energy development (oil and gas, mining, forestry, hydroelectricity), compounded by climate change, on their health, lands, water, plants, and animals. Knowledge holders provided many examples of these impacts, including, but not limited to the disappearance of river fish, drought, forced relocation (moving out of their traditional homes and lands), seasonal calendars, coastal erosion, and flooding, among many others.

Indigenous Peoples' understanding of climate change (and the solutions) are based on the deep relationship with land, water, ice, air, animals, plants, and medicines. This recognizes that they are inseparable from the natural world (Land, Country, Ice), laying the foundation for their laws and customary governance.

- Indigenous Peoples see the world opposite to the Western World, prioritizing the laws of nature, respect for human relations, and then land and resource management. The inversion of natural law within the dominant understanding, where resources are the priority, is leading to the acceleration of the climate crisis.

- Knowledge holders discussed the importance of prophecies (i.e., Jetstream and no-winters) to understand what is to come.  
The importance of intergenerational knowledge exchange was repeatedly stressed, sharing different ways to do this (at the family and community level)
- Indigenous languages, as well as the defense of cultural and Indigenous heritage were highlighted as key to this.
- Knowledge holders shared the role of *gathering* as an approach for the preservation and protection of their environment and the natural world.
- Indigenous Peoples are developing unique adaptation strategies that include economic diversification, reversing the history of pollution by restoring and cleaning terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, and investing in training programs that share Indigenous knowledge and raise awareness about our relationship with the natural world.
- Climate change (and by extension climate action) must be framed as a rights-based activity that is grounded in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Several recommendations were made by Indigenous Peoples who emphasized that they must be engaged in all levels of decision making in relation to climate mitigation and adaptation. Additionally, the following points were highlighted
  - Direct access to climate finance
  - Climate must be discussed alongside emergency management.
  - It is time to stop debating climate change, it is time to take action, based on full partnership of Indigenous Peoples
  - The development of a global Indigenous strategy that targets the dominant economic system, holds major emitters accountable, and aspires to appeal to people and communities by framing climate action a moral issue.

*ROUND TABLE 2: Health and wellbeing in relationship to culture, language, and spirituality*

Key messages:

- Indigenous histories and stories share that we all have unique beginnings and unique origins. We belong to the Earth and the Earth belongs to us.
- Indigenous Peoples reflected that everyone is from the same roots, to rescue the current situation, we must be the decisions makers, advancing their solutions: solutions based in their understanding the disrespect that is driving the climate crisis, as well as our relationship with the natural world (Earth is the law).
- Indigenous Peoples see culture, language, and their relationship to the natural world as interconnected. “The Land and Water is our Life, we are its custodians and it is key to operationalizing our worldview”. Though there is great diversity in Indigenous Peoples, similar key messages emerged from the discussions, such as:

- The well-being of our lands and waters is essential to the well-being of ourselves
- We must do no harm to nature or to the land
- We co-exist with nature, not separate to it.
- Humans need to be humbler when interacting with the natural world. We cannot stop sunrise or sunset, nor can we impact winter or the winds. We need to avoid human exceptionalism and stop neglecting nature (who's laws are stronger than those laws of humans).
- We need to stop the harms we're doing to the land and water, we need to invest in education for young people to restore their connection, as well as their spirituality, language, and cultural activities. These practices cannot be separated from our community governance, legal systems, and protocols.
- We are working on the restoration of our lands, waters, and ice, but realize that unless we address colonization and capitalism, we're just putting a band-aid on the wound.
- We need to talk about the over-criminalization of Indigenous land defenders, sharing examples of *tuko* (standing strong in place) as a strategy of passive resistance and supporting one another.
- We recommend talking about the climate crisis, not climate change, which requires the decolonization of approaches to climate that are based on the knowledge, rights, and governance of Indigenous Peoples.
- The knowledge of Indigenous Peoples needs to be integrated into climate adaptation policies and actions, ensuring that all activities uphold rights in alignment with the articles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These policies and actions must promote the engagement of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the protection of Mother Earth.
- Funding must be directed towards Indigenous Peoples, enabling efforts to support adaptation, loss and damage, and other practices.
- We need to support pastoralists and transhuman corridors, as well as Indigenous Lands and natural environments
- The issue of food security was raised often, with some recommendations to reengage our traditional practices of seed trading. Participants recommended getting access to those seeds held within seed banks, to see whether there were seeds that could help grow with limited water.
- Food security is essential for healthy children and future generations.

- When talking about health and wellbeing for future generations, it is key to understand that Indigenous knowledge, identities, and culture are the answer. The lens of Indigenous well-being is a clear answer and must be articulated to the international community.

*ROUND TABLE 3: Understanding how Indigenous knowledge systems, biocultural diversity and nature stewardship has helped mitigate and adapt to climate change.*

Key messages:

- Climate change is a survival issue, with Mother Earth showing us what is happening with more frequent and severe storms, sea level rises, and other climate impacts. Indigenous Peoples are the original guardians of our homelands but have been killing off everything that we depend on. Mother is tired of our discussions, requires us to re-connect to our spiritual connections and value systems that respect that we are interconnected with nature(as the foundation to everything)
- There are many opportunities to maintain knowledge systems, protect native plant species, and protect biocultural diversity, including through adaptative practices in terms of environmental stewardship and the restoration of our ecosystems
- Indigenous Peoples, especially pastoralists and herders, need corridors / routes that would allow the freedom of movement which help maintain the knowledge and protect our planet.
- There are specific impacts of climate change on women and youth, given how women protect biodiversity (food to eat, herbal medicines, seed saving). There was a recognition that women need to be in decision-making positions. Some described the ways that climate change has impacted women and children specifically, citing the example of the potato, which required a change to another crop because it was no longer possible to grow the potato.
- The structural legacy of colonization is a disconnection from our lands, waters, languages, and cultures. We need to rescue and contribute to our lands by reconnecting and having healthy people living in our lands
- Indigenous knowledge is adaptive and dynamic; our knowledge holders have told us how to adapt. We have saved ourselves by finding alternatives to adapt, and by protecting and revitalizing our knowledge systems.
- We need to confront the reality that many just want the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, but don't want us, our traditional governance systems or our languages. Indigenous knowledge is not separate from us, requiring the protection of land tenure systems, governance systems, and the principles of the UN Declaration including free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC).

- Indigenous-led programs exist in order to prevent biodiversity loss, create programs and support for Indigenous Peoples. These conservation methods respect biocultural knowledge, link to scientific knowledge, and engage all members of the community.
- We must support Land, Air, and Water Protectors, uplifting our understanding of nature as a source of life, not as a commodity. This has informed how we defend the natural world and protect biodiversity, while recognizing the exploitative nature of capitalism will only lead to our destruction.
- Key to this is the recognition and respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the assurance of land tenure rights all over the world, especially for women. This includes our right to self-determination, as well as our right to veto project that may be detrimental to the rest of the world (climate targets).
- Our communities have adaptation-experience, rebuilding after a natural disaster.
- Indigenous Peoples need direct-access to finance, raising concerns with the inability of multi-lateral funding mechanisms – GCF and GEF – to reach Indigenous Peoples on the ground. We suggest removing intermediaries, supporting more mechanisms to go directly to the grassroots
- Several recommendations were made:
  - Revitalize key cultural practices, such as breeding the llama to use special wool and meat to be used in food, which heals and boost our immune systems, and can be used in plants for medicine
  - The current education systems, created in 1857, is insufficient to support youth and children to be resilient in the face of climate change.
  - Indigenous Peoples must be engaged in the development of National Action Plans (NAPs)
  - We must respect and include Indigenous Peoples in all projects including men, women, youth, and elderly.
  - Funding could be used to support Indigenous Peoples to create their own climate and biodiversity policies, as well as extend globally. Indigenous Ranger programs (such as those in Australia) is one such example.

*ROUND TABLE 4: Perspectives of Indigenous youth*

Key Messages:

- There was a clear acknowledgement of the role of Indigenous elders, leaders, fathers, mothers, and children in creating space within these processes for Indigenous youth, as well as setting up our customary governance systems. Participants recognized that we are standing on their shoulders.
- We recognize that youth are resilient to both the impacts of climate change, as well as the ongoing structural impacts of colonization. As a result, we need to ensure that youth are included in all decision-making processes, from the beginning, with spaces built in to speak to each other freely.
- The impact of colonization (including the influence of religion on Indigenous knowledge) has created a gap in knowledge transmission between Elders and youth. This gap can be filled by supporting additional efforts in intergenerational knowledge exchange. One specific example was the creation of a Healing Lodge in the West Coast of Canada, sharing how youth and elders reengage with the land, and by extension themselves.
- Youth recognize the importance of protecting nature, considering rare species, and have taken efforts to monitor water and natural resources, as well as environmental changes. This embodies an ethic of caring for the Land.
- We believe that youth can take additional responsibilities to protect the natural world, based on learning from our Elders and knowledge holders, as well as creating space for implementation and decision-making.
- There were many examples of intergenerational knowledge sharing shared by the participants, including the efforts to teach Inuit throat singer and drum dancing. These examples recognize that our culture is central to who we are.
- This point is even more challenging for those youth that either grew up in urban areas or moved there for work and opportunities. The connection between the urban and rural lived reality was a key area of discussion.
- Some clear recommendations emerged from the discussions:
  - Recognize traditional doctors and knowledge keepers in the formal medical field, as well as language speakers in the education systems (to teach our languages to others)
  - Make space for Indigenous youth in all aspects of climate policy and action, from the beginning through implementation to monitoring.
  - Emphasize the role of education and capacity building, supporting youth in knowledge sharing in safe and supportive spaces.

- Empower Indigenous youth to build programs for themselves. These are the best and most successful examples of Indigenous-led programming.
- An international conference for Indigenous youth, where we exchange sciences, create a network for Indigenous youth, approach funders to create youth-accessible funds for mutual fund and cooperation, and just create a supportive environment.
- Create a fund for Indigenous youth that promotes youth-led initiatives based on taking adaptation, mitigation, and other climate-related action which is easy to access.
- Create a manual or toolkit that amplifies the solutions from Indigenous youth to the Earth, the climate discussion, and the broader UN systems.

## **Summary of Part II: Dialogue with Parties**

The second part of the Annual Gathering included discussion with Party representatives, members of constituted bodies, and other relevant international organizations. The dialogue was framed around one central question:

*How can Parties and Constituted Bodies integrate the outcomes from the roundtables in their deliberations under the UNFCCC processes and in framing the national climate policy?*

Based on this question, representatives shared the following recommendations:

- The concerns and experiences that Indigenous knowledge holders shared with respect to climate change are serious and provide a positive example for why our work on climate change is so important.
- An acknowledgement that equitable participation for Indigenous Peoples in the COP remains a barrier, but that there is a clear commitment to listen to the voices and solutions of Indigenous Peoples throughout all aspects of the UNFCCC. Future discussions on how best to do this were noted.
- Participants noted the importance of ethical inclusion of Indigenous knowledge systems. There were recommendations on how best to explore frameworks where Indigenous knowledge systems to work alongside Western science to protect the environment and support climate action.
- Members of constituted bodies, including the WIM and the Adaptation Committee, reiterated their commitment to work with Indigenous Peoples and the LCIPP, pointing to specific activities contained within their respective workplans.



- Participants also noted the important connection between Indigenous languages and climate action, noting the connection between these two things and the deep understandings that they provide to climate discussions.
- There was an acknowledgement of the importance of ensuring land tenure for Indigenous Peoples, with a specific emphasis on the forest. Participants asked how to scale up direct support for these efforts across the globe.
- Specific examples of positive relationships between Indigenous Peoples and States were shared: the First Nations Voice to Parliament in Australia; the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act in Canada; Climate Change Platform in Bolivia; Saami Climate Council in Finland; and the ratification of ILO 169 in Norway.

**Note of acknowledgement**

*The Co-Chairs are immensely grateful for the depth and breadth of contributions that Indigenous knowledge holders shared in these conversations, as well as the positive and growing participation of Party and constituted body representatives. We look forward to continuing these conversations in the planning for the next Annual Gathering.*