



**For immediate Release**

**IITC EXPRESSES CONCERNS ABOUT THE ONGOING CONFLATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND “LOCAL COMMUNITIES” AT THE CBD COP 16 IN CALI, COLOMBIA**

**Guatemala City, November 11, 2024:** The 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD COP16) met in Cali, Colombia from 18 October to 2 November. Intense working meetings were held during the two-week session focused on the implementation of plans and programs included in the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework approved in December 2022 in Montreal, Canada. The International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) delegation to COP 16 included Indigenous representatives from the Latin America, North America, Africa and Caribbean regions.

One of the outcomes of COP 16 was the decision to create a “Subsidiary Body” focused on implementation of Article 8j of the Convention, which refers to the use of traditional knowledge innovations and practices of “indigenous and local communities” in the words of the Article. The IITC strongly supports the need for continued in-depth discussion on Article 8j, including consideration of proposals to amend this article to bring it into compliance with the rights affirmed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

However, IITC is greatly concerned with the decision of the State Parties at COP 16 to create the Subsidiary Body using text that conflates the terms “Indigenous Peoples” and “local communities.” This practice, in the view of IITC, threatens to diminish and undermine the distinct, inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples in this and other UN bodies as well as in our homelands.

In February 2024, the three UN mechanisms focused on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, issued a specific recommendation for the CBD to “refrain from confusing, associating, conflating or equating Indigenous Peoples with non-indigenous entities, such as minorities, vulnerable groups or ‘local communities’”. This followed a joint statement issued by the three mechanisms in August 2023 which called on all UN bodies to desist from carrying forth this practice, which began in the CBD, because of its negative impacts on the recognition and implementation of Indigenous Peoples' rights.

IITC, which represents Indigenous Peoples from 5 regions, has continued to underscore the vital need for separation of these terms in UN fora including the CBD, and during many meetings of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB), the designated Indigenous Coordinating Body of the Convention sessions. This position was also affirmed by the National Indigenous Peoples Governing Body of Colombia during COP 16, which issued a statement highlighting the need to differentiate between the rights Indigenous Peoples and local communities in these processes. We are concerned, therefore, that the IIFB continued to present the terms “indigenous peoples and local communities” together in their statements at COP 16, overlooking the lack of consensus on this point among Indigenous Peoples within the IIFB itself.

IITC will continue to engage in these CBD processes, including the Subsidiary Body on Article 8j as it develops, to defend the minimum rights standards affirmed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. IITC will also continue to work for accountability and the implementation of true consensus processes within Indigenous Peoples' international coordination bodies to ensure that the collective positions they present to the world uphold these minimum standards.

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***Kuj chukun pui riqab' antajik qawinaqil qib'***  
***Working for the Rights and Recognition of Indigenous Peoples***  
***Trabajando por los Derechos y el Reconocimiento de los Pueblos Indígenas***