



International Indian Treaty Council
Consejo Internacional de Tratados Indios

100 E. Ajo Way
Tucson, AZ 85713
Phone: (520) 833-9797
Email: iitc@treatycouncil.org
www.treatycouncil.org

For Immediate Release

IITC and other Indigenous Peoples REJECT the FINAL DECLARATION of 2nd International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD+20)



Members of the IITC delegation with other Indigenous Peoples attending the ICARRD, February 27, 2026, IITC Photo.

February 28, 2026, Cartagena, Colombia: On the last day of the 2nd International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD+20) the Indigenous participants from 7 regions and 19 distinct Indigenous Peoples formally rejected the final Conference Declaration.

The Conference was hosted by the government of Colombia from February 24-28 in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, and was attended by 60 States. It was preceded by an International Academic Conference from February 20- 22, 2026 and a Forum of Peoples and Social Movements “United for land, water, territories, and dignity” on February 22 and 23, 2026. Indigenous delegates participated in both pre-conferences.

The stated objective of ICARRD+20 was “to discuss and renew international commitments on equitable access to land, agrarian reform, and sustainable rural development, recognizing land as an essential condition for combating hunger, reducing rural poverty, and strengthening peace.”

Despite the vital importance of these themes to Indigenous Peoples and their rights, IITC and other Indigenous delegations collectively rejected the final Declaration adopted by the States. The primary reason was, in their view, that the States had eroded and undermined the distinct collective rights of Indigenous Peoples by conflating them with ambiguous terms and groups, such as "local communities" in the Declaration despite numerous objections raised by Indigenous participants and their allies from Civil Society throughout the process.

During the negotiations, Indigenous delegates had consistently affirmed the need to adhere to the internationally affirmed rights contained in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the recommendations of the three United Nations mechanisms — the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Chair of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. These mechanisms have clarified that the characteristics, nature, and origins of the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples as Peoples are fundamentally distinct from those of other groups. They have further stated that Indigenous Peoples must not be grouped together with undefined “local communities” that may have very different and even conflicting rights and interests.

Indigenous participants expressed their appreciation for the intervention of UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Michael Fakhri at the Conference, who also conveyed the concerns of Indigenous Peoples to the governments present. They likewise expressed deep appreciation and respect for the solidarity of the social movements present, who, in unwavering unity, joined Indigenous Peoples in rejecting the Conference’s final Declaration during the closing ceremony.

Saúl Vicente Vázquez, member of IITC’s Board of Directors and a Zapotec leader and participant in the Conference, thanked the social movements of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), which brings together more than 6,000 organizations worldwide and represents over 300 million members, for their steadfast support against this attack on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Dionicio Canahui, IITC’s Food Sovereignty Program Co-coordinator and member of the Maya Achi People who also participated in the Conference, called on all governments, UN bodies, and agencies to refrain from conflating references to “Indigenous Peoples” with the term "local communities" in all documents emerging from their official meetings and instead to consistently affirm the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the internationally recognized minimum standard for the rights, survival and dignity and well-being of the Indigenous Peoples of the world.

###

The International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) is an organization of Indigenous Peoples from North, Central, South America, the Caribbean, Arctic and the Pacific working for the Sovereignty and Self Determination of Indigenous Peoples and the recognition and protection of their Rights, Treaties, Traditional Cultures, Sacred Lands and Waters.