



WG2020 2

Rome, Italy 24 - 29 February 2020

Opening statement

Distinguished co-chair and to all participants,

I am speaking on behalf of the IIFB.

First, we want to thank the contributors to the voluntary fund for supporting our participation, which is necessary for the full realisation of the goals of this convention.

Our opening message for this important meeting is that “Cultural intelligence working with nature is the best way forward.” Halting the loss of cultural diversity goes hand in hand with reversing biodiversity loss.

As the original stewards and owners of the lands and waters on this planet, we have lived in harmony with nature for thousands of years. Our goal was and still is to ensure that our lands and waters are abundant for our future generations – intergenerational equity in practice. Our diverse cultures and languages are intrinsically tied to the biodiversity of our lands and waters: built on daily and long-term observations of living with nature. Our customary laws on the use and management of biological resources within our territories, ensure healthy and resilient ecosystems while sustainably meeting our needs.

The contribution of Indigenous governance to conservation is one of the key messages of the IPBES global assessment report. Much of the world’s wild and domesticated-species still survive in areas traditionally managed, owned, used, or occupied by indigenous peoples and local communities. This is because we possess indigenous and local knowledge, and because our societies possess the structures of resource management and decision-making that make it possible to apply this knowledge. Therefore, our systems of governance and law must be affirmed, revitalized, and supported if that knowledge is to continue to be transmitted through generations for the benefit of biodiversity.

True “transformative change” requires State recognition of our land tenure – including coastal areas and seas – access, resource rights, and the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination. Historically and to the present day, conservation and restoration approaches have infringed the rights of Indigenous Peoples by further dispossessing and displacing us from our lands and waters. We urge Parties to adopt a strategy which increases the lands and waters managed and conserved by IPLC’s through partnerships, which recognize our customary conservation and sustainable use.

We fully appreciate that the Zero Draft recognizes the participation and rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities as an enabling condition to facilitate the implementation of the Post-2020 Framework. The IIFB recommends that these be reflected strongly in the action targets and indicators throughout the entire framework. Through partnerships and collaboration, we can work together to reverse the current global trends of decline of nature.



In order to bend the curve of biodiversity loss, we need to bend the curve of inequality and ensure the equitable sharing of benefits and costs. As such the post-2020 framework must clearly integrate human rights in the goals, target actions, and indicators.. We support the call for the protection of human rights and environmental defenders. Their struggle is our common cause.

The IIFB believes that the largely utilitarian approach to nature reflected in the Zero Draft will not get us to the 2050 Vision of “Living in Harmony with Nature”. In fact, we believe it is a core part of the problem. We look forward to working with you in contact groups to address our concerns. Biological and cultural diversity are not only closely linked but also mutually reinforcing. As such, an effective mainstreaming of biodiversity into different sectors in society would also need mainstreaming culture - taking into consideration that there is diversity of culture, values and worldviews. The 2030 mission and the 2030 and 2050 goals need to reflect and recognize the co-evolution of biological and cultural diversity and their inextricable linkages, such as referred to in the Sharm el Sheikh Declaration on “Nature and Culture”

For transformative change to happen, the post-2020 Framework needs to end perverse economic incentives that sustain destructive activities, as well as biodiversity financing that harm IPLCs, and redirect them to activities that benefit both nature and people.

Nature needs urgent measures. We need to act now to protect our biodiversity. There is no more time to waste. The recognition of our rights to govern our own territories and practice our knowledge contributes to community and ecosystem resilience. As the guardians and defenders of Mother Earth, we urge all governments to act on behalf of biodiversity. See us as the most valuable part of the solution, and work together with us towards a new relationship with nature - one that heals and sustains for all of our future generations.

Thank you. Olu giitu.