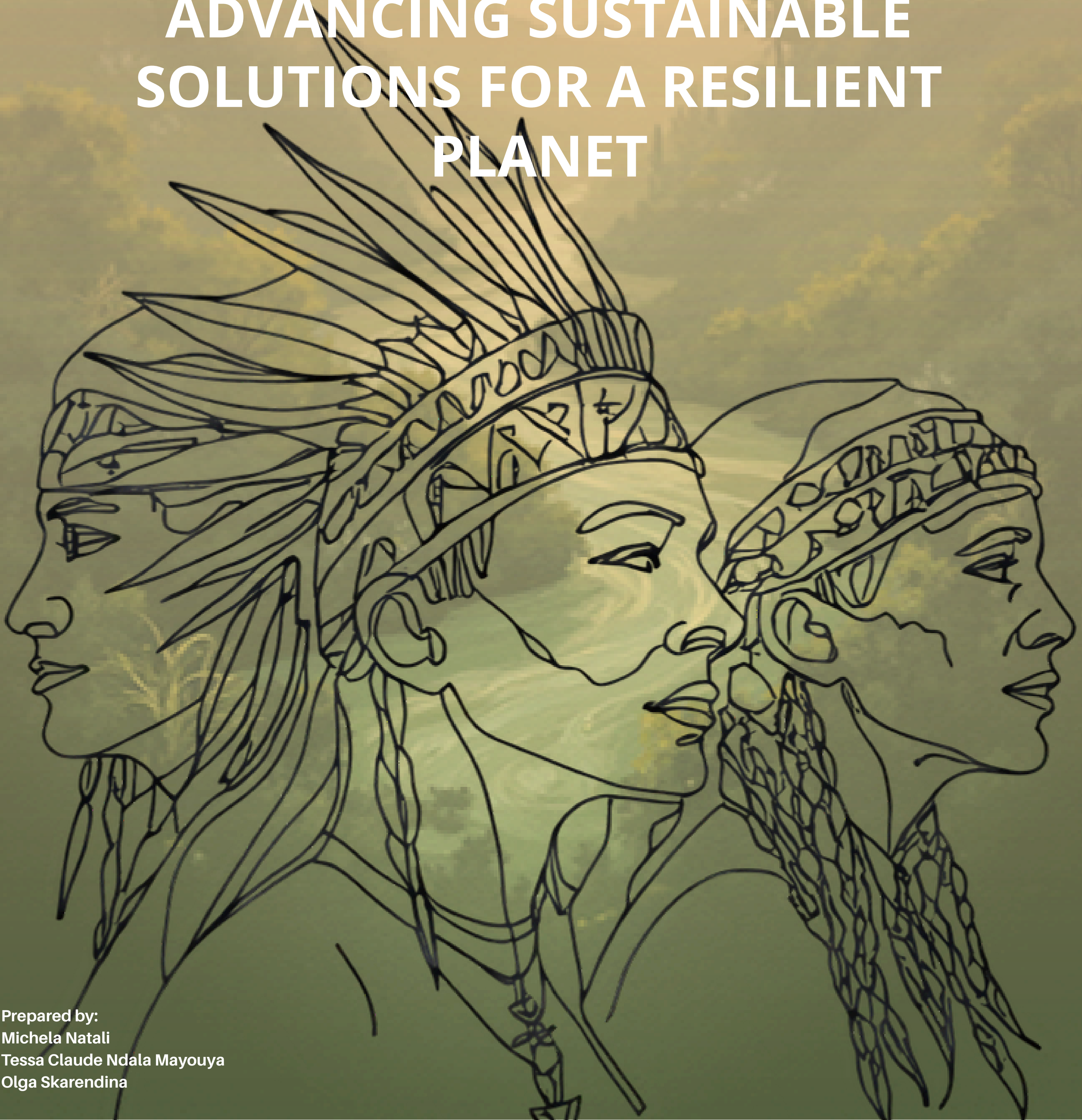


High Level Event

08 / 12 / 2025
15:00 (EAT)

UN 
environment
assembly

SPECIAL DIALOGUE ON THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES IN ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR A RESILIENT PLANET



Prepared by:
Michela Natali
Tessa Claude Ndala Mayouya
Olga Skarendina

Moderators



Rochelle Diver
Moderator

Rochelle Diver, Anishinaabe, is a citizen of Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe, an Indigenous Nation in Northern Minnesota. The Anishinaabe are water bearers, freshwater fishers, hunters and traditional stewards of the Great Lakes of the US and Canada. She is the UN Environmental Treaties Coordinator at the International Indian Treaty Council where her work focuses on the interconnectedness between food sovereignty, environmental toxics and the holistic health of Indigenous Peoples and future generations.



Heni Unwin
Moderator

Heni is a connector, a connector of worlds, a connector of oceans and a connector of people. Her work is driven by those things that enrich and sustain her life, her river, her ocean, her mountain, her forest and her family. Holding expertise in Te Reo Māori, Chemistry, Marine Science and Environmental Science, she interweaves different knowledge systems into her work to achieve equitable outcomes for our future. She is working towards securing accessible pathways for our future generations in the science sector, securing Indigenous rights and knowledge in international policies and developing research that centres on 'kia whakahoki te mauri ki te Ao Turoa', reciprocating that which has been taken.

Word of Thanks

Prem Singh Tharu is from the Tharu Indigenous community of western Nepal, having one and a half decades of diverse experiences in the human rights field, particularly on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, environmental human rights, persons with disability, children and youths, education, livelihoods, peace building and conflict management and five years of teaching. He has been working with Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, since 2016. He is currently serving as one of the co-facilitators of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group to UNEP. Academically, he has a master's degree in Law from the National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland and in Anthropology from Tribhuvan University of Nepal. He is also an advocate.



Prem Singh Tharu
Co-chair, Tharu Indigenous
Community

Opening Session



Ole Kapiani
Massai Indigenous Elder and
Knowledge Holder, Indigenous
Information Network

Ole Kapiani is an elder from Kenya of the Maasai People and of the Ilkisaruni age set, a devoted father and grandfather. He has played a vital role in documenting the Siria Biocultural Protocol and preserving the diverse cultural heritage of the Siria community. As a landowner and active member of the Nyekweri Kimintet Community Forest Conservation Trust, Ole Kapiani has been a strong advocate for the conservation of Nyekweri Forest and its surrounding environment. His work extends to biodiversity conservation, where he actively promotes the protection of local flora and fauna, supports sustainable land management practices, and engages the community in environmental stewardship initiatives to maintain ecological balance and ensure the long-term sustainability of the forest ecosystem.



Inger Andersen
Executive Director, UNEP

Inger Andersen is the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations. Between 2015 and 2019, Ms. Andersen was the Director General of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Ms Andersen brings a passion for conservation and sustainable development with more than 30 years of experience in international development economics, environmental sustainability and policy-making, as well as in designing and implementing projects and generating on-the-ground impact. She has played a key role in supporting riparian countries on international water management and hydro diplomacy. Ms. Andersen also held various leadership roles at the World Bank for 15 years including as Vice President of the Middle East and North Africa and Vice President for Sustainable Development and at the United Nations starting in the UN Sudano-Sahelian Office working on drought and desertification issues.

Frankie is a Husband of 24 Years, and a proud Father. He serves as the Executive director of the society of Native Nations and Executive Director of the Society of Native Nations, Co-facilitator of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group with UNEP, and an Indigenous Fellow with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Frankie is a dedicated advocate for environmental justice and the rights of Indigenous Peoples. For over 25 years, he has championed Mother Earth and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, building relationships and bridges between cultures and advancing the rights and wisdom of Indigenous Peoples. He believes that education, collaboration, and understanding are the cornerstones of a sustainable future for all



Frankie Orona
Borrado/ Tongva /Chumash
Co-Chair, IP Major Group

Aluki Kotierk is the Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). Aluki is driven by her passion to empower and improve the lives of Inuit. Aluki is keen on how the Inuit language and culture can be better incorporated into the way in which programs and services are designed and delivered in Nunavut. Aluki is a former co-chair representing Indigenous People's Organizations on the Global Task Force for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL) 2022-2032. After earning her master's degree in Native and Canadian Studies at Trent University, Aluki worked for various Inuit organizations including Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (now known as Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami), and Nunavut Sivuniksavut. She has also held management and Deputy Minister roles within the Government of Nunavut and the Office of the Languages Commissioner. Aluki was the President of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) from 2016 to 2024.



Aluki Kotierk
Chairperson, UNPFII

Session 1: Harnessing Indigenous Peoples Knowledge for Environmental Action



Dr. Gardner is a Mexican-American who has spent three decades as a bridge-builder working at the interface between science, policy and international environmental governance. Since beginning her career as a marine scientist in Mexico, she has been driven by the recognition that healthy ecosystems are foundational to human well-being and resilience. In her current position as the Director of the Ecosystems Division of the UN Environment Programme based in Kenya, she leads global programmes to support countries to protect, restore, and sustainably manage natural ecosystems, from land to the high seas. With projects in over 100 countries, her work has fostered cross-sectoral collaboration to help countries advance science-based solutions to meet their biodiversity, climate, and land degradation neutrality goals.



Susan Gardner
Director Ecosystem Division,
UNEP

Indigenous Peoples' Voices from the Rio Conventions: Achievements, challenges and path forward.



Lucy Mullenkei
International Indigenous
Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB)

Lucy Mullenkei is a Kenyan Masaai specialized in Gender, broadcast journalism and a human rights Activism. Ms Mullenkei has vast experience in Environmental issues and community development work, focusing on issues related to Environment. She ensures that a human rights are key in development and that it is critical to emphasis on Women and Girls rights t includeing Reproductive health rights, education, and development impacting IPLCs. As Executive Director of Indigenous Information Network, she has advocated for the recognition and respect of the voice and rights of remote IPLCs, women and girls. Ms Mullenkei carries many roles, She is a Member of several Boards, Co-founder of a number of Indigenous Peoples Networks, among them the African Indigenous Women's Organization, the International Indigenous Women's forum, Indigenous Women Biodiversity Network, the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, and has been working with other Indigenous Peoples with the Global Environment Facility as a Chair of the Advisory Group (IPAG). She is currently a chair of the WWF indigenous Peoples consultive group.. She has been one of the Members of the High-Level Commission on the Summit on ICPD25 Follow-up. In addition she is Member and a Co-Chair of UNEP/ FAO UN Advisory group Ecosystem Restoration. Ms Mullenkei is an adviser to organizations and coalition on Indigenous Peoples and traditional knowledge, Peoples rights related issues that impact on Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities



Sara Olsvig
Inuit Circumpolar
Council

Sara Olsvig, PhD, is the Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (2022–2026). As an Inuk leader she is a dedicated defender of Indigenous Peoples' rights and human rights. Olsvig holds extensive experience in politics and international advocacy. She has served as member of the Parliament of Denmark (2011–2015) and the Parliament of Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) (2013–2018). Olsvig was Vice Premier and Minister for Social Affairs, Families, Gender Equality and Justice from 2016 to 2018. As a parliamentarian, she served as chair of The Greenland Committee and the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region. Olsvig contributed actively to the work of Greenland's Constitutional Commission and the Greenland Human Rights Council. In 2024, Sara Olsvig was a member of the UN Secretary-General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals and is a recipient of the 2023 Womenomics Inclusion Award.

Olsvig holds a Master of Science in Anthropology from the University of Copenhagen, and a PhD-degree in Arctic studies from Ilisimatusarfik – the University of Greenland.

Indigenous Peoples' Voices from the Rio Conventions: Achievements, challenges and path forward.



Sela Motshwane is a renowned environmentalist, grassroots development advocate, and the founding Executive Trustee of the GreenBotswana Trust, an organisation dedicated to ecological restoration, climate resilience, and community-driven environmental stewardship. With a career spanning more than two decades, she has become one of Botswana's most influential voices in sustainable development and local-level action. Sela made national history as the first person in Botswana to launch a One Million Tree Campaign, a visionary movement aimed at restoring degraded landscapes, improving biodiversity, and empowering communities to lead climate action initiatives. Her innovative approach to conservation blends traditional ecological knowledge with modern environmental strategies, ensuring that the solutions are culturally relevant, inclusive, and sustainable.

Throughout her career, Sela has remained committed to development through grassroots action. For over 20 years, she has served as a tireless ambassador for community-led environmental change, working to ensure that ordinary people—particularly rural and indigenous communities—are at the heart of Africa's sustainability solutions. Her work continues to inspire environmental practitioners, policymakers, and young leaders across the continent.



Sela Motshwane
Green Botswana Trust

Joan Carling is an Indigenous leader and environmental defender with decades of experience advocating for Indigenous Peoples' rights, land protection, and climate justice across local to international platforms. She currently serves as Executive Director of Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI) and has held roles including Secretary-General of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact and as a UN Permanent Forum expert member. In recognition of her lifelong advocacy, she received the UN Environment's Champions of the Earth Lifetime Achievement Award (2018) and the Right Livelihood Award (2024).



Joan Carling
Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI)

Reflections from INC and BBNJ: What's next for Indigenous Peoples engagement in other MEAs?



Juan Leon
International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Plastics (IIPFP)

Juan Leon Alvarado (Maya Maya K'iché) is a former lecturer, grassroots activist, and Guatemalan diplomat with more than 50 years of work experience at national, regional, and international levels. Juan Leon is currently representing the International Indian Treaty Council, an organisation of Indigenous Peoples from the Americas, the Caribbean, and the Pacific working for the Sovereignty and Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples in international negotiations related to conservation, biodiversity, and protected areas. He was the President and representative of Defensoría Maya, a high-profile NGO in Guatemala promoting the human rights of the Maya people. Juan Leon held the positions of Ambassador of Guatemala to Cuba, Norway, Denmark, and Ecuador. He has extensive experience drafting international and regional legal standards that protect the human rights of Indigenous Peoples. He notably participated to the drafting process of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Between 2003 and 2007, he was President of the Working Group responsible for drafting the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



Roberto Borrero
International Indian Treaty Council (IITC)

Roberto Borrero has a distinguished and diverse background in policy & program development, the arts, and human rights advocacy, including a specialization on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. He retains over 30 years of experience actively engaging the United Nations system in thematic areas such as Sustainable Development, Climate Change, Oceans, and the BBNJ Treaty, among others. He currently serves as the Associate Director of the International Indian Treaty Council and is a citizen of the Guainía Taíno Tribe of Borikén and the Virgin Islands. In 2012, he was traditionally sanctioned a kasike (chief) of the Guainía Taíno Tribe. His educational background is in communications and cultural studies. In 2013, Dr. Borrero was awarded an honorary Doctorate Degree, Philosophy in Humanities, from Kayiwa International University, Kampala, Uganda.

Session 2: Role and contributions of Indigenous Peoples and their communities in advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet.



Tabi Joda is a distinguished Indigenous knowledge holder and leader known for his pioneering efforts in promoting Indigenous knowledge systems and practices for sustainable land and ecosystems management, biodiversity conservation, and indigenous food systems. Through his exemplary initiatives such as leading One Billion Trees for Africa and the Great Green Wall, Tabi has showcased the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge with modern approaches to enhance resilience against biodiversity loss and climate change impacts. His dedication to championing indigenous practices has not only enriched his local communities, cutting across Nigeria and Cameroon, but also contributed to global conversations on environmental sustainability. His pivotal role in bridging indigenous wisdom with contemporary solutions has been instrumental in fostering resilience and collaboration across diverse stakeholder groups. Tabi Joda's leadership and commitment to empowering indigenous communities, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting sustainable development practices that honor both the past and the future are obvious. Through his multifaceted approach with championing the Great Green Wall, GreenAid, and One Billion Trees for Africa, Tabi continues to inspire change and pave the way for a more inclusive and resilient world.



Haman Joda Tabi
International GreenAid-One BillionTrees for Africa

Dr. rer. nat. Yolanda López-Maldonado is an Indigenous earth systems scientist from a Maya community in Mexico. Her research focuses in the revival and recovery of Indigenous science to address complex Earth system challenges, with a focus on water systems. She emphasizes the importance of Indigenous Earth observations for sustainable policies and advancing science diplomacy. She has worked and collaborated with diverse organizations including UNESCO, ICCROM, IPBES, to address complex socio-ecological issues from an Indigenous perspective. Holding a PhD in Human Geography from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany, she has been a Young Scholar at the Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics, in Sweden, a Junior Fellow at IIASA, in Austria, and a Global Young Academy member, in Germany. As Lead Author of the UNEP Global Environment Outlook Report (GEO7), she was recently appointed Reviewer Editor for the IPBES Second Global Assessment. Dr. Lopez-Maldonado also founded Indigenous Science, an Indigenous-led organization committed to incorporating Indigenous knowledge into global scientific environmental frameworks and related multilateral and diplomatic initiatives.



Yolanda Lopez
Indigenous Science

Sharing best practices for sustainable land management and ecosystems restoration from Indigenous Peoples

Ms. Marina Tonkopeeva, Project Leader, International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry (ICR), Norway. Marina coordinates the work of the 10545 GEF-UNEP Peatland project in reindeer herding areas in Mongolia and Norway, working closely with the Dukha and Sámi reindeer herders. Ms. Tonkopeeva has a background in sustainable development, technologies for Indigenous languages, and knowledge co-production. Co-authored three books on Indigenous Sámi reindeer husbandry.



Marina Tonkopeeva
International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry (ICR)

Maleli Qera Rakula is a conservationist and Indigenous chief from Fiji. He is a Project Officer at the Fijian chapter of Community Centred Conservation (C3), an NGO. For the last 12 years, Qera has been working with rural and remote communities in Vanua Levu, Fiji's second largest island, spreading awareness on how resource owners can apply environmental best practices when using their natural resources. He manages involvement of youths in understanding and conducting Coral Reef Assessments and establishment of Locally Managed Marine Areas in rural communities. Maleli started the Reef Rangers Program, a conservation group involving indigenous youth.



Maleli Qera
Community Centred Conservation, Fiji

Session 2

Sharing best practices for sustainable land management and ecosystems restoration from Indigenous Peoples



Lorena Terraza is a woman of Quechua descent, she is an internationalist, environmental lawyer, and specialist in developing projects with a focus on gender, Indigenous peoples, and climate change. She is a teacher and facilitator of dialogue processes and the transformation of socio-environmental conflicts. She has experience working with international organizations, in public administration, and in international cooperation. She also has experience working with organizations and networks at the global and Latin American levels on environmental and climate change issues. Her expertise includes climate change adaptation with Indigenous communities and women, gender-based violence, the environment, sustainable development, the SDGs, and the 2030 Agenda.

Lorena Terraza
Red AZ Integración y Desarrollo
(Pazinde)

Sharing best practices for sustainable land management and ecosystems restoration from Indigenous Peoples



Erika Xananine Calvillo Ramírez is a Climate justice activist and Indigenous rights defender. Co-founder of "Jna Tsjo" a women and youth-led initiative to protect the ngiwa biocultural knowledge of food in the Valley of Tehuacán. Community organizer at Legado Gaia (LEGAIA) and the Stop Financing Factory Farming Coalition (S3F).

Erika Xananine
Jna Tso

Hanieh Moghani is a Member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). She serves as Senior Legal Advisor at the Centre for Sustainable Development and Environment (CENESTA) in Iran and as Regional Coordinator for West and Central Asia and the Caucasus with the ICCA Consortium. Her work focuses on Indigenous Peoples' rights, biodiversity governance, and environmental justice, particularly in the context of climate change and community based sustainable territorial management.



Hanieh Moghani
CCA Consortium



Dr June Rubis is a Bidayuh scholar and Indigenous strategist from Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo. A conservation biologist with a DPhil from the University of Oxford, she is a Research Fellow at Macquarie University, Australia, leading Decolonial Cartographies, which recentres Indigenous sovereignties in global biodiversity governance. June's work bridges ecological knowledge, ritual governance and policy design, and she co-founded Building Initiatives in Indigenous Heritage (BiiH), a Bidayuh-led foundation revitalising ritual and kinship governance in Borneo.

June Mary Rubis
Building Initiatives in
Indigenous Heritage

Lena Yanina Estrada Añokazi. Indigenous of Uitoto Minika people from Colombian Amazon. Former Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia. She has been a representative of Indigenous Peoples in the MGF. Political scientist and PhD in Sustainability. She has contributed to processes of indigenous peoples, in the claim of rights of various social sectors; contributing to the creation and implementation of public policies for the protection of territory, biodiversity, traditional and indigenous knowledge, human rights, the dignity of women, the participation of youth, the protection of children, the promotion of art and culture, and coordination with various actors for the construction of peace.



Lena Estrada
Society of Native Nations