

Jennifer Corpuz, Nia Tero, World Leaders Summit, Glasgow, 2 November 2021

Indigenous peoples have contributed the least to climate change and yet we stand to suffer the most because of our close relationship with nature. We comprise only 5 percent of the global population, but we protect 80% of forest biodiversity and we harbor 22% of above ground carbon in our forests.

Intergovernmental science panels confirm that Indigenous peoples have contributed, through our customary governance practices and traditional knowledge, to biodiversity conservation and climate mitigation and adaptation. Evidence is mounting that recognition of Indigenous tenure is the most efficient and effective way of protecting the planet.

My organization, Nia Tero, recognizes the important role that Indigenous Peoples play in protecting the planet. We believe that where Indigenous Peoples thrive, places and nature thrive. This is why we support the self-determined vision and governance of place-anchored peoples who maintain a spiritual and reciprocal relationship with nature.

Our partners believe that ocean is kin, that all beings within their lands and waters are relatives. This holistic view should be honored.

The LEAF Coalition, with its commitment to the Cancun safeguards, has the opportunity to recognize Indigenous tenure and holistic view of ecosystems. This is an opportunity to value Indigenous lands, waters, territories and resources not just for the carbon, but for its biological, cultural and spiritual values.

This commitment has to be put into action. While LEAF takes a jurisdictional approach, it cannot overlook the customary tenure of Indigenous Peoples. The Cancun safeguards are global, not dependent on national law, and demand that free, prior, and informed consent must be sought and obtained before Indigenous territories can be included in jurisdictional proposals to LEAF. This requires a sub-agreement with Indigenous peoples and guarantees of rights recognition and benefit-sharing. But Indigenous peoples are not mere beneficiaries. We are full partners and we deserve to be able to directly access results-based payments from the LEAF Coalition and others.

Increased ambition to protect forests and conserve biodiversity and commitment of greater financing bring increased pressure on and risks for Indigenous peoples. We must make sure that safeguards are faithfully implemented to prevent dispossession and criminalization.

As we wait for Article 6 negotiations to conclude, VCMs have an opportunity to demonstrate the right way to do things in full partnership with Indigenous Peoples. Let us ensure recognition of Indigenous Peoples rights to ensure the health of the planet.

Thank you.