

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Tebtebba, Press Briefing on Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Financial Pledge, Glasgow, 2 November 2021

We welcome this financial pledge to Indigenous Peoples and local communities. For the first time, we see a global partnership of influential nations and donors responding so dramatically to the evidence of Indigenous Peoples playing an outsized and unsung role in conserving the natural world.

When the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLC) are recognized, secured, and protected, rates of deforestation tend to be lower and carbon stocks tend to be higher than in forests managed by others, including protected areas. This is robustly documented and accepted in the academic literature and by the IPCC and the IPBES biodiversity platform.

This isn't just about carbon. Securing rights for IPLCs also benefits the integrity of our ecosystems and biodiversity; reducing pandemic risk. Analysis by the UN and big conservation organizations earlier this year found most IPLC land is still in good ecological condition; of all land that is still in good ecological condition, 40% is managed by IPLCs.

Not only is securing IPLC rights effective at protecting our forests and biodiversity, but it's also cost-effective.

However, the communities that manage half the Earth's surface and care for 80 percent of what remains of biodiversity are the ones least likely to receive direct financial support.

Up to 50% of the world's land is collectively held by Indigenous Peoples and other local communities and managed primarily under customary tenure arrangements, but only 10% is recognized.

This means: In tropical rainforests in the Global South, IPLC rights have not been secured or recognized in an area the size of the continental United States--around three million square miles.

And threats are intensifying. Private companies, organized crime, and government actors take advantage of unclear, uncertain, overlapping, and contested land claims to profit off forest destruction and human rights violations, grabbing land and clearing forests for agricultural expansion, mining, fossil fuel development, illegal logging, narcotrafficking, and financial speculation.

We can no longer count on remoteness to protect forests or assume high-quality forests will remain protected. At least 25% of IPLC land is now under direct threat, 80% in good ecological condition. This has massive climate implications since 25% of forest carbon is in IPLC lands.

Despite their overwhelming positive impact on the environment, IPLCs receive little direct financial support. 3% of climate finance for forests; 1% of forest finance for IPLCs - a fraction of a percent for a HUGE solution.

Just \$270 million per year on average, with little going either to rights recognition or directly to IPLC orgs. Only \$46 million went to projects that even mentioned an IPLC org name in their title.

Indigenous Peoples are demanding policymakers and the world to:

- recognize and enforce their territorial rights
- stop the criminalization and murder of forest guardians
- direct access to financing for climate-mitigation and adaptation measures.

- the right to have a say over investment projects that affect their cultures, traditions, and lands (what's known as the right to "free, prior, and informed consent"); and
- the incorporation of traditional knowledge in solutions developed to fight climate change.

We welcome this financial pledge as the beginning of the support Indigenous Peoples need. But our communities need much more. We will be watching to see how well these funders will help to reverse a trend that put most of the climate funds for mitigation in the hands of multilateral banks and large NGOs. We also welcome the focus on scaling up land rights and building our capacity for governing and managing funds. But we will decide what accountability looks like based on our culture.

There is no nature-based solution for climate change if Indigenous Peoples are not central to every proposal.