



# Becoming an Indigenous peoples' organisation Member

A convening platform for collective action and influence



## About IUCN

IUCN is a membership Union composed of both government and civil society organisations. It harnesses the experience, resources and reach of its more than 1,400 Member organisations and the input of more than 18,000 experts.

**To date, IUCN is the only global intergovernmental membership organisation that includes a distinct membership category for Indigenous peoples organisations.**

IUCN has a long history of working with Indigenous peoples, both to promote the recognition of their rights at the policy level and to engage and support Indigenous peoples in conservation activities. Integrating Indigenous peoples' organisations into the governance of IUCN enables indigenous-guided and led solutions in environmental decision-making and action.

Simply put – our diversity and vast expertise makes IUCN the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. The richness of our Union is defined and strengthened by the diversity of our membership, and Members engage to set the global conservation agenda, benefitting from:



## How we operate

Composed of its Members, Commissions and Secretariat, IUCN is a democratic Union that brings together the world's most influential organisations and top experts in a combined effort to conserve nature and accelerate the transition to sustainable development.

**Members** set the direction of the Union's work, and global conservation efforts more broadly, every four years at the IUCN World Conservation Congress by passing resolutions and agreeing on the IUCN Programme. During the 2016 World Conservation Congress, IUCN Members acknowledged the contribution and importance of Indigenous peoples for conservation and humanity, and voted to create a new membership category for Indigenous peoples' organisations. Indigenous peoples' organisations used the power of their collective IUCN voice and proposed and voted on IUCN resolutions in this new membership category for the first time at the 2021 Congress.

The **IUCN Commissions** are broad and active networks of scientists, experts and indigenous knowledge holders providing IUCN and its Members with sound know-how and policy advice to drive conservation and sustainable development. Commissions lead on education and communications; ecosystem management; environmental, economic, and social policy; gender;

protected areas; rights-based approaches; species survival; and environmental law. Indigenous peoples also participate in leadership positions or as commissions ensuring that Indigenous peoples expertise, experience, knowledge and voice are integrated into IUCN strategy, knowledge products and work.



**The Secretariat** focusses its work on key themes through four centres and operational regions in order to anchor its knowledge locally and better serve Members' needs. Though all IUCN Centres engage and address Indigenous peoples rights and priorities, specialised coordination is managed under IUCN's Centre for Society and Governance, which ensures IPOs directly influence IUCN's policies, programmes, platforms and projects to promote indigenous rights while enriching IUCN's priorities for inclusive conservation and environmental actions.



## Influence

As a membership Union, Indigenous peoples organisation Members can influence the global community to advance and strengthen common actions in overcoming barriers to a sustainable future that promotes and protects indigenous rights and leadership.

**“Indigenous peoples have raised their voices at the national and international levels, expressing that global policies can only achieve their objective if they are implemented at the territorial level, respecting, recognising and promoting indigenous rights – the basis for living in harmony with Mother Nature, human beings and the universe.”**

– Ramiro Batzin, Sotz’il Director, IUCN Councillor and Vice President of the IUCN Council



Proposing and voting on setting the global conservation agenda through the IUCN Congress for the first time in 2021,

**100% of indigenous-endorsed motions were approved as IUCN resolutions**

IUCN also amended its Statutes in 2021, establishing a formal position for an elected Indigenous Councillor to IUCN’s Council, the principal governing body of IUCN between sessions of the World Conservation Congress.



## Partnerships and Networks

Due to its unique structure, IUCN creates space to bring Indigenous peoples organisation Members together with other Members and partners from across governments, NGOs, private sector, academia and more.

**“For any meaningful environmental benefits to be achieved, partnerships and not working in silos is the key. IUCN provides that space for Indigenous peoples to partner with themselves, governments, conservation NGOs, the private sector and academia among others.”**

– Dr Kanyinke Sena, Director,  
Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee



The Global Indigenous Agenda was launched by Members in 2021 during

**the first ever World Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nature**

as an official Summit of IUCN’s World Conservation Congress. Supported by a global communications campaign on *Indigenous Insights – Stewarding the Earth*, the Summit advocated that enhanced measures are required to protect the rights of Indigenous peoples and their roles as stewards of nature.



## Collective Voice

IUCN's Indigenous peoples organisation Members have developed a self-determined strategy to collectively influence IUCN's work. Through this approach, indigenous organisation Members craft and amplify a collective global voice to promote indigenous-led knowledge and solutions.

**“Working together at the global level is essential to re-setting conservation policies and practices to include indigenous knowledge and indigenous lands and waters tenure in order to achieve better conservation outcomes for nature and peoples.”**

– Aroha Te Pareake Mead, Chair Emeritus,

IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP)



Indigenous peoples organisation Members collaborated together to develop their

**Global indigenous agenda for the governance of indigenous lands, territories and natural resources**

– which defines the high-level priorities of Indigenous peoples and calls upon the global community to engage in direct support activities, and is actively being used by Members as an awareness-raising and advocacy tool in international environmental policy.



## Knowledge and Increased Capacity

IUCN produces the world's most trusted scientific and data-driven knowledge products, tools and guidance – creating space for influencing the standards, criteria and principles set by IUCN for effective and inclusive conservation action.

**“The IPO status provides intellectual and political space for Indigenous peoples to influence standards and decision-making consistent with our world views and values. There is now potential to co-produce knowledge with Indigenous peoples on the basis of ethical and equitable terms to ultimately achieve inclusive conservation action.”**

– Dr Dalee Sambo, Chair, Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)



Through the Inclusive Conservation Initiative, a Global Environment Facility project implemented by IUCN in partnership with Conservation International,

and leading on sharing knowledge and strengthening capacities to make the case for direct conservation finance.

**IUCN is supporting US\$ 25 million in direct financing to Indigenous peoples and local communities**



## How to apply for IUCN membership

Information on IUCN membership is available on the IUCN website Member pages. To download the membership application form, which contains detailed step-by-step instructions on how to apply, explore admission criteria and review the application process, please visit:

<https://www.iucn.org/about/union/members/how-become-member-iucn>

You can also contact a Membership Focal Point for your region, who will also assist your application, by visiting:

<https://www.iucn.org/about/union/members/membership-focal-points>

### About this brochure

This material was produced by IUCN's Human Rights and Conservation Team, with thanks to and collaboration with regional Indigenous peoples organisation focal points.

The design is by [Estudio Relativo](#) and photos are from Shutterstock.

