

## Institutionalizing Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities' Role in Biodiversity Conservation

A historic decision, institutionalizing the role of Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) in biodiversity conservation marked the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Cali, Colombia.

This milestone not only honors indigenous traditional knowledge and practices but also promotes a more inclusive approach to safeguarding the planet's ecosystems.

For decades, IPLCs have been custodians of biodiversity, managing vast ecosystems and preserving genetic resources through their traditional practices. However, their role was often underrecognized in global biodiversity governance. Since its adoption in 1992, the CBD has included provisions for IPLC involvement under Arti-

cle 8(j), which emphasizes the need to respect and preserve traditional knowledge. Despite this, IPLC participation remained limited to an ad hoc working group with no formal decision-making authority.

The decision adopted on 1 November 2024 marks a turning point, formally elevating IPLC participation through the establishment of a Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions. This move recognizes their indispensable contributions to the Convention's implementation, its protocols, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Transitioning from an ad hoc working group to a formal Subsidiary Body ensures IPLCs have a stronger, more consistent voice in biodiversity governance. This institutionalization enables them to ac-

tively shape policies and programs, ensuring that their traditional knowledge and practices are integrated into global conservation efforts. The Subsidiary Body is tasked with developing its operational methods, with an emphasis on ensuring the "full and effective" participation of IPLCs. These methods are expected to be presented for adoption at the next COP.

The decision also includes a renewed Program of Work on Article 8(j), which emphasizes the need for Parties to recognize, support, and value IPLC knowledge and practices in biodiversity conservation. This program is expected to provide a roadmap for integrating IPLC contributions into the implementation of the Convention.

*Continued on page 7*



Photo credit: IISD-ÉBN



# OPENING STATEMENT OF IIFB (International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity) to the 16th Meeting of the Conference of Parties of the UN CBD (Convention on Biodiversity), in Cali, Colombia



Photo credit: IISD-EBN

## Opening Statement

Date: 21 October 2024

**Statement on behalf of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) delivered by Manuel Jesus Mavisoy Juagibioy of the Mesa Permanente de Concertacion.**

**T**hank you, Madame President. I speak on behalf of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB). The IIFB recognizes the 115 Indigenous Peoples of Colombia, especially the Misak, Nasa, Yanacona, Eperara and Siapidara in whose traditional lands and territories we meet today. We thank the COP Presidency for their warm welcome and, the Voluntary Fund for enabling our participation.

This COP is crucial for setting the tone for implementation of the Biodiversity Plan, ensuring a rights-based and whole-of-society approach that enables our full and effective participation in achieving the goals and targets of the Plan.

Item 14 on Implementation of Article 8(J) is a key priority for the IIFB, and we call for the establishment of the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j). This will create the necessary institutional arrangements for enhanced dialogue with the Parties to the CBD to address issues in depth.

This Body shall build on the working methods and accumulated experience of the Working Group on Article 8(j) and related provisions. We support the adoption of the new Programme of Work on article 8(j), and we have prioritized 25 tasks which we will present in due course.

Regarding resource mobilization and the financial mechanism, the IIFB calls for an inclusive approach that provides direct and equitable access to financial resources for Indigenous peoples and local communities from all socio-cultural regions and all ecosystems, ensuring they fit our diverse capacity needs. Indigenous Peoples and local communities must be included as equal partners in developing a governance structure that will ensure an inclusive and equitable mechanism directing funds and enhances our collective biodiversity actions.

Regarding DSI, the IIFB urges Parties to adopt the modalities for

operationalizing the multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism on DSI at this COP. Indigenous Peoples and local communities should be included in the governance of the mechanism and the fund and be the primary beneficiaries. As the most effective guardians of biodiversity, our direct access to the fund must be ensured because in the current system, funds often pass through intermediaries that charge high administrative fees, with only a trickle of funds going to local action.

IIFB believes that strong and abiding partnerships between CBD Parties and Indigenous Peoples and local communities are the foundation for successful GBF implementation, planning, monitoring, reporting and review. IIFB puts forward the following proposals to proceed smoothly and effectively on adopting the monitoring framework. IIFB urge Parties to adopt the indicator on land use change and land tenure in the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as headline indicator for Target 22 by lifting the existing brackets. We further urge Parties to lift the remaining brackets in the COP Decision, including those in Annex 1 and Annex 2.

IIFB considers that there remain gaps with respect to the application of a human rights-based approach, as a fundamental consideration of Section C of the KMGBF. These gaps need to be addressed in future work towards improving the monitoring framework of the KMGBF.

The IIFB calls for ensuring the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities particularly women and youth

*Continued on page 5*

# The Indigenous Peoples' Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan



## OVERVIEW

The IPBSAP is a collective commitment of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines, affirming their roles, traditional knowledge, values, rights, and inter-relationship with their territories and biodiversity.

The IPBSAP provides:

- An overview of the status of biodiversity within Indigenous Peoples' territories in the Philippines;
- Their worldview on the interconnectedness of nature and culture;
- A summary of the policy, governance, and financing landscape;
- An action plan aligned with the 23 Targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework;
- Case studies showcasing Indigenous contributions to biodiversity conservation; and
- Guidance for implementing biodiversity actions in the Philippines.

The IPBSAP will be continuously enhanced through sustained efforts to localize and enable community-led implementation and monitoring.

## CONTEXT

Indigenous Peoples play a critical role in conserving and managing the biological and cultural diversity of the Philippines. Their values, knowledge systems, and customary governance have long guided the stewardship of their ancestral lands and waters.

In the Philippines, approximately 96 out of 128 identified key biodiversity areas are known to be part of



the ancestral domain of Indigenous peoples (Tebbeba, 2008). About 75% of the country's remaining forests are also found in Indigenous territories (Philippine Association for Intercultural Development).

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF)—adopted in 2022 by the Convention on Biological Diversity—emphasizes Indigenous Peoples' rights, contributions, and participation in biodiversity conservation. This framework presents a significant opportunity for Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines to shape inclusive biodiversity policies while advocating for the recognition of their rights, sustainable practices, and equitable benefit-sharing.

## AN INDIGENOUS-LED PROCESS

The IPBSAP was developed through an Indigenous-led consultative process initiated by Indigenous Peoples' organizations and support NGOs, collectively forming the Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Coalition Philippines (IPBC).

This process sought to align KMGBF global goals with national and local biodiversity initiatives, emphasizing the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights.

Key milestones:

- Two National Roundtable Discussions, a Northern Luzon inter-regional roundtable, and a writeshop that brought together insights from:
  - » 30 Indigenous Peoples' organizations and communities;
  - » 11 Indigenous NGOs and networks;
  - » 14 support agencies and funders.

*Continued on page 7*



# Tanglag Women

## guardians of Indigenous Food Systems



Binga from Lake Sabong

Tanglag women play a vital role in preserving their indigenous food systems and farming traditions, ensuring their sustainability despite various challenges.

Tanglag, a village in Lubuagan, Kalinga, is accessible via a two-hour hike through rugged terrain and across the Chico River from the national road in Lubuagan. The community relies on its rice fields, *uma* (swidden farms), and pastured animals as sources of food. Natural resources from the surrounding forests, the Chico River, and Lake Lobong serve as additional food sources to sustain the villagers.

Lake Lobong serves as a vital source of fish and shells (*binga*). Similarly, the surrounding forests, which house wild deer (*ugsa*) and pigs (*damman*).

According to Cecilia Jacinto, a village elder, women are primarily responsible for farming, managing everything from land preparation to harvest.

Paulita Batoy, another elder, highlighted the importance of *Innabuyog*, an indigenous practice of reciprocal labor. This tradition fosters collective farming to

ensure that every household in the community has enough food.

Batoy recalled how women would form groups to work on each other's farms without expecting monetary returns. She emphasized how her mother taught her the value of mutual aid—helping others mill rice or sharing viands during meals as a community act of food security.

### INDIGENOUS FARMING

The indigenous peoples of the Cordillera have developed agricultural practices that have sustained their communities for generations. They know when to prepare the land, plant, and harvest. They carefully manage the planting of rice varieties like *Unoy* (red rice) and *Oyak* (white rice).

In Tanglag, rice is planted twice a year (July and December), while swidden farming is done annually in May. Jacinto and Milagros Ngayaan explained that women often plow the rice paddies using their feet and sometimes utilize cows for larger paddies, preserving the natural soil quality. Women also manually uproot weed from gardens, unlike modern methods that involve burning.

Traditional methods, such as using *kikilaw* (scarecrows) to drive away birds and chili pepper sprays to repel insects, are being used instead of harmful chemical pesticides.

Tanglag is among the Kalinga villages that still practice “*to-or*” a ritual practiced before planting and harvesting rice. On the said day, community folks will stay at home and rest. The village will also be closed to non-residents. It is said that failure to observe this ritual will result in bad luck such as decreased harvest, illness or accident.

### CHALLENGES

Despite Tanglag's successful preservation of its indigenous food systems, several challenges threaten their sustainability:

Climate change, economic shifts, government policies, and large-scale development projects that threaten indigenous ways of life also pose challenges to the indigenous food systems.

The drying of rice fields and Lake Lobong due to rising temperatures highlights the urgent need for

Barangay Tanglag Spot Map

Tanglag as an Agricultural Community

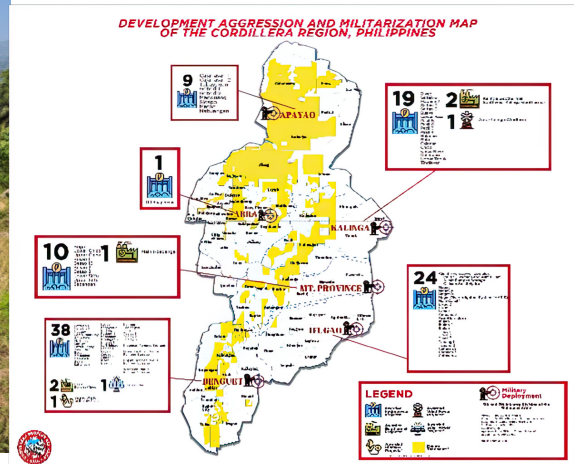
Lake Lobong is gradually drying due to the abnormal rise in temperature.





The Mighty Chico River

Tikag (drought) in Tanglag



Map of Development Aggression and Militarization by the Cordillera Peoples Alliance

climate adaptation strategies that are locally led and culturally appropriate. The shift from a subsistence to a cash economy is also deeply concerning, as it alters traditional communal support systems like *Innabuyog*. Many now prioritize financial survival over collective food security because their harvests are just enough to sustain their families.

Moreover, the encroachment of state structures and large projects on indigenous governance systems is a longstanding issue. These development projects are often accompanied by state military forces and the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), which camps in the villages under the guise of counter-insurgency. Such measures stifle community dissent and limit their ability to organize

and strengthen food security programs.

### Resistance and Resilience

Despite these challenges, the people of Tanglag continue to assert their rights to their land and indigenous practices. Sustaining indigenous values of resource management like taking only what they need from the forest, rivers and lake while protecting these from destruction has kept their tribe alive for generations.

In the 1970s, the Kalinga and Mountain Province communities collectively opposed the Chico River Dam Project that would inundate their villages. Indigenous women were at the forefront of this struggle. Their courage and unity saved their ancestral lands and indigenous food systems.

This spirit of resistance endures. On April 23–24, 2024, Tanglag hosted the 40th Peoples’ Cordillera Day, reaffirming their commitment to reject destructive projects and safeguard their land, life, and dignity.

People’s Cordillera Day has always been a celebration honoring the legacy of Cordillera heroes and martyrs—from those who resisted the Chico River Dam and Cellophil Logging to those who continue defending the Cordillera homeland and its people today.

Tanglag’s story underscores the vital role of women in sustaining indigenous food systems and highlights the importance of community solidarity in addressing modern threats to food security.

*Written by: Jeanree C. Gabaen*



Photo credit: IISD-EBN

*Continued from page 2*

of these communities in the updating and implementation of NBSAPs.

COP16’s theme “Peace for Nature” takes center stage, reminding us of the critical link between peace, justice, and the protection of our natural world. This theme underscores the importance of fostering peaceful co-existence not only between nations but also between people and the ecosystems they depend upon for survival. As we advocate for “Peace for Nature,” we also call for peace and dignity for peoples all over the world who are not able to do so themselves.

We stand ready to elaborate on our proposals at the contact groups and other meetings of this COP.

Thank you, Madame President.



## Highlighting the Indigenous Concept of

# Healing & Wellness

The roundtable introduced opportunities to promote Indigenous healing and wellness further. Academic institutions were encouraged to facilitate student exposure to traditional healing methods through observation, research, and documentation. Suggestions included developing modules and special courses on Indigenous healing practices. Meanwhile, communities and advocates were urged to create more spaces for robust discussions and exchanges.

The event concluded with the drafting of ten key advocacy messages to advance Indigenous health and wellness. These are:

1. Implement existing national and regional health policies, adapting them to local contexts.
2. Recognize the efficacy of Indigenous health and wellness (IHW) practices and integrate them into the mainstream healthcare system.
3. Appreciate the unseen and holistic nature of IHW practices.
4. Conduct more research and documentation on IHW practices.
5. Increase educational activities promoting IHW.
6. Encourage community and home gardening.
7. Recognize sacred Indigenous sites and promote traditional environmental conservation practices.
8. Support Indigenous peoples' right to practice IHW, particularly home birthing and traditional birth attendants, by crafting supportive policies.
9. Recognize Indigenous ownership of resources and knowledge related to medicinal plants and other natural health products, ensuring fair benefit-sharing.
10. Prioritize preventive and community-based healthcare over curative and hospital-centered systems.

The roundtable set the stage for future exchanges on indigenous health and wellness, with participants agreeing to advocate for these messages through various platforms and initiatives.

**C**ordilleran Indigenous healers based in Baguio City brought attention to the Indigenous perspective on healing and wellness during a roundtable discussion held on November 14, 2024.

Organized by Partners for Indigenous Knowledge Philippines, the event gathered participants from community organizations, Benguet State University, and the health sector.

The discussions featured participants' experiences with various Indigenous healing practices, such as the use of medicinal plants, healing massage, prayers, rituals, and water. These methods underscored the contrast between the Indigenous concept of healing and Western medicine. According to Dr. Penelope Domogo, "While Western medicine is fragmented—requiring specialists for each part of the body—the Indigenous perspective considers the entirety of the physical, spiritual, and environmental aspects."

This holistic approach is evident in the use of nutrient-rich ingredients for both food and medicine and in customs that emphasize caring for the local ecology as a vital source of healing and sustenance.

In the Cordillera region of the Philippines, medical professionals have recognized the value of Indigenous customs in patient care and recovery. They have advocated for their integration into community health programs (Agoot, 2018). However, sustaining and promoting Indigenous medical practices remains primarily the responsibility of Indigenous communities, their partners, and advocates.

Continued from page 3

- The IPBC actively engaged in the update of the Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (PBSAP), facilitated by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).



- On August 6, 2024, the first version of the IPBSAP was officially handed over to the DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau for integration into the updated PBSAP.

To amplify its impact, the IPBSAP was launched at several events, including a global launch during a side event at the 16th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Cali, Colombia.

## OBJECTIVES

The IPBSAP aims to:

1. Provide an overview of biodiversity in Indigenous territories in the Philippines.
2. Communicate the contributions and commitments of Indigenous Peoples to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.
3. Highlight key issues and recommendations from the perspective of Indigenous Peoples.
4. Serve as a guiding document for Indigenous Peoples' biodiversity actions.
5. Showcase examples of Indigenous contributions, good practices, and initiatives in conservation, sustainable use, and benefit-sharing.

Continued from page 1

### The Cali Fund: A New Benefit-Sharing Mechanism

A related groundbreaking decision is the operationalization of the Cali Fund, a mechanism for equitable benefit-sharing from the use of digital sequence information (DSI) on genetic resources. Under this system, corporations profiting from the commercial use of DSI must contribute to the fund. This ensures that IPLCs, who play a critical role in conserving genetic resources, receive a fair share of the benefits.

DSI refers to the digital representation of genetic materials such as DNA or RNA. It is a critical resource in modern science, enabling researchers to analyze genetic data, develop medicines, improve agricultural practices, and monitor biodiversity. DSI often comes from genetic resources found in IPLC territories.

The Cali Fund's guidelines prioritize transparency and accountability in benefit distribution, with mechanisms to ensure IPLC communities are the primary beneficiaries. This initiative is not only a financial milestone but also a recognition of the ethical obligation to compensate IPLCs for their invaluable contributions to biodiversity conservation.

These decisions align with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's targets and set a powerful precedent for other international agreements. By institutionalizing IPLC participation, the CBD reinforces the global shift toward more inclusive and equitable biodiversity governance.

Beyond policy, the decisions have tangible implications

for conservation efforts. IPLC-led initiatives, such as community-managed forests, agroecological practices, and marine conservation areas, have consistently demonstrated success in preserving ecosystems. Recognizing and scaling such efforts can accelerate global progress toward biodiversity goals.

The decisions adopted in Cali, Colombia, mark a historic moment for Indigenous peoples and local communities. By institutionalizing their participation and creating mechanisms like the Cali Fund, the CBD has laid the foundation for a more equitable and effective approach to biodiversity conservation. The positive impacts of these decisions are expected to resonate across communities worldwide, paving the way for a future where traditional knowledge and global governance work hand in hand to protect our planet.

Written by: Rendilyn Cuyop



Published in 2024 by the COD-ILK  
#54 West Bayan Park, Leonilla Hill, Baguio City 2600,  
Philippines

**Editorial Board:**  
Joji Cariño  
Rendilyn Cuyop  
Kimberlie Quitasol  
Maria Elena Regpala



# CLOSING STATEMENT OF IIFB (International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity) to the 16th Meeting of the Conference of Parties of the UN CBD (Convention on Biodiversity), in Cali, Colombia

## Closing Statement

Date: 02 November 2024

Statement on behalf of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) delivered by Camilo Nino of the Comisión Nacional de Territorios Indígenas (CNTI)

Thank you Madam Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB).

Regarding the resources mobilization this COP 16 highlights the importance of any financial mechanism for biodiversity, existing or new, needs continuous reflection and enhancement to transform financial flows that are equitable, direct, adaptive and responsive to

realities on the ground and inclusive of our regions. We reiterate the importance of full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the governance and operationalization of these mechanisms.

Regarding the Mechanisms for Planning, Monitoring, Reporting and Review, IIFB welcomes the adoption of the KMGBF Monitoring Framework and Indicators, most importantly the inclusion of the land use change and land tenure as a headline indicator. Indigenous Peoples and local communities present here are committed to making substantive progress towards implementation of the KMGBF and the new programme of work on traditional knowledge, including its monitoring through community-based mapping, monitoring and information systems. We look forward to working with Parties to ensure robust methodologies and data management systems on the state of our lands, waters, languages and the practice of traditional occupations,

contributing to the conservation, sustainable use and equitable benefit-sharing under the Convention.

On the subject on Digital Sequence Information (DSI), We welcome mandatory non-monetary benefit-sharing and remain committed to strengthening the Mechanism and Cali Fund to empower Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in biodiversity conservation. We will continue working to increase in recognition of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities' origins in DSI metadata. Expanding eligibility thresholds, using sales as the metric, and prioritizing nature in the Cali Fund will enhance biodiversity support.

Regarding Article 8(j) and the adoption of the new Program of Work and the Subsidiary Body on Article 8j) is historic and we will continue working for the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Article 8j.

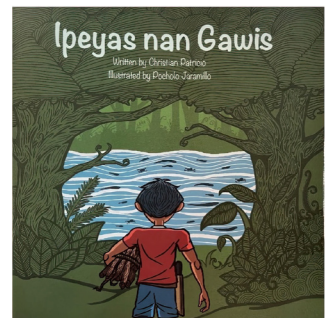
We thank all Parties for making the decision to create this body, and to be part of the history of the CBD and of this COP, the COP of the people.



Photo credit: IISD-EBN

## Ipeyas nan Gawis

This children's book is a creative take on the Igorots' Indigenous social value that highlights the importance of generosity. The title, Ipeyas nan Gawis, which translates to "share what is good," is complemented by the phrase adi tako bukukodan di gawis—"let us not keep the good things to ourselves." Together, these phrases express the timeless counsel to embrace sharing and foster community solidarity. For the Igorot Indigenous communities, this wisdom serves as a gentle reminder to resist selfishness and greed, preserving a value deeply rooted in their cultural identity.



PIKP BOOKS



## A Day in Kafagway: A Day in Baguio Plaza

Designed as a children's coloring book, this work illustrates the profound changes in lifestyle, society, and landscape across generations. Set in the ancestral domain of the Ibaloi Indigenous peoples in Baguio City, Philippines, it presents parallel narratives that contrast the simplicity and harmony of the past with the complexities of the present. More than just a visual narrative, the book sheds light on the struggles of the Ibaloi people as modern concepts of development encroach on their ancestral lands. It shows how these changes have gradually eroded Indigenous practices and ways of life, raising awareness about the urgent need to protect and honor their cultural heritage.