



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
OF THE  
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS  
On the occasion of the  
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES  
9 August 2016**

*“Indigenous Peoples and their Right to Education”*

*We walk to the future in the footprints of our ancestors<sup>1</sup>*

While many countries have made significant advances, indigenous peoples continue to face challenges in accessing their right to education, in particular their right to access a culturally appropriate education inclusive of their histories, world views and traditional knowledge and delivered through culturally appropriate teaching strategies, in appropriate cultural settings, and in their own languages.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) works on several themes relevant to indigenous education, most significantly traditional knowledge, innovations and practices, and customary sustainable use of biological diversity.

The Secretariat of the Convention works closely with regional and local organizations of indigenous peoples to deliver culturally appropriate training through a “train-the-trainer” methodology on participation in the implementation of the Convention, and on substantive issues such as community based monitoring and information systems, community protocols for traditional knowledge, and the implementation of the global “Plan of Action on Customary Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity”.

At its twelfth meeting, in 2014, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention agreed on advancing guidelines to protect and promote traditional knowledge to assist Governments in the development of legislation or other mechanisms, including national action plans and *sui generis* systems, for the effective implementation of Article 8(j) and related provisions of the Convention, thus recognizing, safeguarding and fully guaranteeing the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities over their knowledge, innovations and practices.

This includes developing guidelines to ensure that public and private institutions interested in using traditional knowledge obtain prior informed consent or approval and involvement of indigenous peoples and local communities, that indigenous peoples and local communities obtain a fair and equitable share of

<sup>1</sup> Kari-Oca Declaration, Brazil, 30 May 1992.



**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**

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benefits arising from the use and application of their knowledge, innovations and practices. The guidelines will also assist Parties and other Governments in developing national mechanisms for reporting on and preventing the unlawful appropriation of traditional knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

It is expected that the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its thirteenth meeting, to be held in Cancun, Mexico, from 4 to 17 December, 2016, will adopt these guidelines. When implemented effectively, the guidelines can go a long way towards ensuring that indigenous peoples remain in control of their traditional knowledge, innovations and practices, which is a foundation for indigenous education.

Traditional knowledge is characterized by its practical nature – often locally based, dependent on biological resources, and transferred orally and intergenerationally. The intergenerational transfer occurs mainly from elders to youth and through customary sustainable use of biodiversity. In many ways, one could argue that the classroom for traditional knowledge is customary sustainable use.

In 2014, the Conference of the Parties adopted a global Plan of Action on Customary Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity and requested Parties to report on the implementation of the Plan biennially to the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Implementation and through the national reports.

In the lead-up to 2020, in order to achieve the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Targets, the Secretariat is ramping up efforts to monitor implementation of guidelines and other tools, in order to achieve Aichi Biodiversity Target 18, which aims to ensure that traditional knowledge is respected and reflected in the implementation of the Convention.

To that end, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention has adopted four indicators to measure status and trends in traditional knowledge and customary sustainable use. They are: (a) trends in linguistic diversity and the number of speakers of indigenous languages; (b) trends in land-use change and land tenure in the traditional territories of indigenous and local communities; (c) trends in the practice of traditional occupations; and (d) trends in the degree to which traditional knowledge and practices are respected through full integration, participation and safeguards in national implementation of the Strategic Plan.

The Convention continues to work with the world's indigenous peoples to play our part in ensuring that traditional knowledge and customary sustainable use are respected, protected and encouraged so that they can continue to be the foundations for indigenous education into the future. That is beneficial not only to indigenous peoples and local communities, but to all people.

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### **Additional information**

The thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will take place from 4 to 17 December 2016 in Cancun, Mexico. Indigenous peoples have enhanced participation mechanisms under the Convention, including a voluntary fund for the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in meetings held under the Convention. Representatives of indigenous peoples' organizations interested in participating in the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties are invited to complete an application form at [www.cbd.int/traditional/fund.shtml](http://www.cbd.int/traditional/fund.shtml). Please submit the completed application along with an official letter of nomination at least three months before the meeting you are applying for to [secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) or, in the case of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, by 2 September 2016.

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<sup>2</sup> Traditional knowledge accessed without prior informed consent or approval and involvement of the knowledge holders.