



**Statement by Elizabeth Maruma Mrema  
Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity  
on the occasion of the  
International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples**

*"COVID-19 and indigenous peoples' resilience"*

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that a thriving and rich nature is essential to human health and wellbeing.

Indigenous peoples' traditional lifestyles are a source of their resiliency. However, in contemporary times, indigenous peoples are particularly affected by COVID-19 because they also face many other challenges, including extreme poverty, overcrowded housing and limited access to health services.

These circumstances can make indigenous peoples more susceptible to infectious diseases, particularly new ones. Therefore, limiting the spread of COVID-19 in indigenous peoples' towns and communities is an urgent priority, particularly with regards to indigenous elders, the custodians of traditional ecological knowledge, history and culture which forms the foundation of their identity.

Urgent measures are needed to avoid devastating effects on the world's indigenous communities. These include disseminating information in indigenous languages, giving indigenous peoples priority in the public health response and focusing attention to their specific needs.

The pandemic has demonstrated the consequences of the overwhelming impact that humans have on nature. Human-led declines in biodiversity enable the conditions in which new diseases emerge, co-evolve and spread. It is clear that the loss of biodiversity needs to halt. Indigenous peoples, as resilient and sustainable societies, have contributed significantly to the protection and restoration of ecosystems, and sustainable use of biodiversity. Their traditional practices to protect and heal nature already place them as stewards of biodiversity. Their knowledge, skills and techniques are a source of valuable information for the global community, and provide critical guidance in developing biodiversity policies that will allow the world to achieve the vision of by 2050 living in harmony with nature.

As humanity seeks to build a sustainable future, it is now, more than ever before, time to bring diverse knowledge systems together. The traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, together with science, forms the best possible knowledge base for managing local ecosystems and addressing the multiple crises that we currently face.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) promotes respect for the knowledge, innovation and practices of indigenous peoples, as well as their active and effective participation in all matters that directly affect them. Accordingly, CBD Parties and indigenous peoples have embarked together on



developing a robust and ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The continued contribution of indigenous peoples as partners to the new post-2020 global biodiversity framework is decisive for building a resilient and sustainable future for all people.

Today, on the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, we come together in solidarity and partnership with indigenous peoples everywhere to create a better, more resilient and diverse world.

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