



EU SHOULD ENSURE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION FUNDING RESPECTS INDIGENOUS PEOPLES RIGHTS

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Brussels, September 12, 2024. – Today, CIDSE, the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR, Coventry University), the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences in Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), the Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organisation's Forum (PINGOs Forum), the Pastoral Women's Council (PWC) and others launched their joint policy brief "[Protecting the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to Halt Biodiversity Loss](#)." This significant publication emphasises the urgent need to respect and protect human rights in global biodiversity conservation projects and strategies.

A Collective Call for a New Conservation Paradigm

As the biodiversity crisis intensifies, with species extinction rates accelerating globally, this policy brief calls for a radical shift in conservation approaches. The authors argue that current conservation models, often centred around exclusionary "fortress conservation" are not only ineffective but also harmful, leading to the displacement of Indigenous peoples and local communities from their lands under the pretext of environmental protection. The EU is likely to increase its biodiversity conservation funding as part of its efforts to implement the [Montreal Kunming agreement](#) to protect 30 per cent of the planet by 2030. There is a risk, the authors highlight, that biodiversity funding leads to more pressures on the lands managed by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, resulting in more human rights violations and displacement of people.

Unified Recommendations for Rights-Based Conservation

Conservation models must respect and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who manage 80 per cent of the world's remaining biodiversity. Yet, these communities face increasing threats from global environmental policies and projects, including those funded by the European Union and its member states. While the EU has recently embraced a new landscape approach to conservation, concrete measures must be put in place to ensure conservation efforts do not violate people's rights. The policy brief's key recommendations include:

- **Ending Exclusionary Conservation Models:** The policy brief calls for the abandonment of "fortress conservation" approaches in favour of co-management models that empower Indigenous Peoples and local communities to protect biodiversity in partnership with global actors. This means avoiding any kind of displacement, promoting conservation approaches that integrate humans and nature and ensuring biodiversity finance is managed and monitored by local communities.

- **Securing Land Rights:** Protecting the right to land of Indigenous Peoples and local communities is paramount. The policy brief advocates for legal recognition and protection of the human right to land as a foundational element of effective biodiversity conservation, in light with UN Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ([UNDRIP](#)) and of the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas ([UNDROP](#)).
- **Guaranteeing Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC):** All biodiversity projects, especially those funded by the EU, must secure the FPIC of Indigenous Communities, in line with international human rights standards. Meaningful and active participation of local communities should also be ensured.
- **Redirecting Biodiversity Finance:** The policy brief urges that biodiversity financing be redirected to support sustainable practices such as agroecology and pastoralism, which enhance biodiversity while safeguarding the rights and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Pastoralism is a viable livelihood and land management system that does not receive adequate support.

Event Highlights and Contributions

The launch event, held in Vienna during the [Tropentag Conference](#), featured powerful testimonies from Indigenous leaders and representatives from partner organisations. A Maasai human rights lawyer from Tanzania, whose community has been directly impacted by exclusionary conservation practices, movingly described the situation: "*Your conservation areas are a warzone to us.*"

Panel discussions delved into the intersections of biodiversity, human rights, and sustainable development, reinforcing the need for a collective, rights-based approach to conservation.

A Unified Call to Action

This joint policy brief represents a united call from CIDSE and its partners for a reimagined approach to global conservation efforts. By placing Indigenous rights at the centre of biodiversity conservation, we can create a sustainable future that respects both people and nature.

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About the Organisations:

- [CIDSE](#) is an international family of Catholic social justice organisations working together for global justice.
- [Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience](#) (CAWR), Coventry University is a research centre dedicated to the development of resilient food and water systems through agroecology.
- [Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa](#) (AFSA) is a pan-African network of civil society organisations championing food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa