

International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) Statement
SBSTA Technical Workshop on the Development of Early Warning Systems
June 3, 2015

Article 31 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) sets a framework for the recognition and protection of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge. Article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Cancun Safeguards and the recent report of the Inter governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have acknowledged the importance of traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples in biodiversity conservation, forest conservation and management and climate change adaptations, respectively. The Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, Japan has adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which explicitly acknowledges the importance of traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples in early warning systems. These international instruments and agreements shall thereby serve as part of the framework in the development of early warning systems.

The development of early warning systems is pertinent and appropriate for early preparations and to avoid or at least reduce the risks induced by climate change disasters to lives, health, property, culture and the collective wellbeing of indigenous peoples. The development of early warning systems shall include the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples relating to climate change adaptation and as well as appropriate modern techniques, tools and innovations that will take into consideration the indigenous peoples' specific circumstances and conditions, as well as their cultural integrity. Through generations, indigenous peoples have cultivated and transferred their weather forecasting practices and predictions of disasters based on traditional knowledge linked with nature and behaviors of animals such as birds, animals, insects, as well as the condition of natural elements such as wind, clouds, and moon, among others.

The integration of traditional knowledge with the development of early warning system increases the community members' ownership of this and reduces their risk to disasters. Further, there is a need for widespread awareness raising about climate change among indigenous peoples, the risks and their vulnerability to the adverse impacts including on their agricultural systems. It is equally important to build the capacity of indigenous peoples to understand and use appropriate modern technology and tools relating to early warning systems. For example, indigenous peoples are now increasingly using radio and other forms of media tools such as mobile phones as an early warning device. The facilities and access to these technologies shall then be provided to them especially those living in remote and high risk- areas. Finally, in order for early warning systems to be successfully implemented and sustained, concerted efforts of all stakeholders and the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples including indigenous women is key in the design.

The traditional land use system of indigenous peoples shifting cultivation or rotational agriculture is one of the main agricultural systems practiced by indigenous peoples. The traditional knowledge, cultural, spiritual and nutritional values attached to this livelihood system demonstrate that this is not merely a technique of land use but the indigenous peoples' way of life. It is providing the livelihoods, food security and wellbeing of millions of indigenous peoples. However, the impacts of climate change are affecting the food productions in the shifting cultivation areas. In addition to the impacts of climate change, continuing conversion of indigenous peoples' forests and agricultural lands into commercial mono-cropping plantations such as biofuels, sugarcane, and other extractive projects such as mining and logging, as well as the construction of large hydropower dams are posing serious threats to food security and biodiversity, among others. These types of projects should also be regarded as high risks to sustainable agricultural systems of indigenous peoples, during the assessment of the risks and vulnerability of agricultural systems.

Thank you!