

Review of the SDG Implementation

SDG 15 - Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Friday July 13 2018, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Statement from the Indigenous Peoples' Major Group delivered by Gunn-Britt Retter, (Saami Council)

Mr Moderator,

At least 80% of the world's forest and 60% of biodiversity are found in the territories of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous Peoples account for only 5% of the global population and yet 15% of the global poor. Furthermore, only 10 % of our customary lands are legally recognized.

The most bio-rich land on earth is where Indigenous Peoples have managed the ecosystems, sustained over millennia. Based on the fundamental principle of Indigenous philosophy - sustaining our social, cultural, spiritual, economic, environmental and political relationships for the next generations. It is a management process that involves the inherited comprehensive policies that guarantee sustainability, fair distribution and respect for the territory and its resources that goes beyond a simple technical management. There is a holistic and symbiotic relationship between healthy ecosystems and Indigenous peoples. This is recognised by international instruments such as the CBD and the SDG.

Left to our own devices, then, Goal 15 is where Indigenous Peoples are *not* the furthest behind. Yet, lack of recognition regionally places us most at risk. The biggest threat to forest and biodiversity is corporate raid of our resources and states' refusal to exercise their human rights obligations to keep powerful entities

accountable. We continue to be criminalized in practicing our sustainable livelihoods, and are labelled as anti-development or even terrorist in defending the planet which all of us rely on.

The continuing deforestation and forest degradation caused by others threaten our livelihoods, eco-system services essential for food security and nutrition, and may generate more acute competition for the remaining resources among the different users.

(Finally, Mr Chair, when ecosystems are damaged and degraded, the livelihoods and health of everyone is affected. All human life depends on it, we as Indigenous Peoples stand ready to be part of the solutions.)

The Indigenous Peoples Major Group have 3 recommendations:

1. Recognize, protect and promote Indigenous Peoples' rights to lands, territories and resources as a precursor to achieving Goal 15;
2. Ensure Indigenous People's full and effective participation at all levels in implementation of SDG 15.
3. Respect, protect and promote the indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge, innovations and practices and the customary use of biological resources, so these may be enjoyed by the next generation.

Thank you.