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**\*\*\*MEDIA ADVISORY—FOR PLANNING PURPOSES\*\*\***

**Report Release and Panel Discussion**  
09:30 GMT, 3 February 2016, London, UK

## **Forests on the Brink: Six Weeks After COP in Paris, Experts Report Some Countries Poised to Deliver on Commitments To Forests, But Point to Growing Resistance to Land Rights for Local Peoples—Best Guardians of Forests**

*At Feb. 3 event in London, researchers also will reveal hidden costs of removing local communities to establish protected lands in DRC, Liberia, while handing investors new evidence of high price of insecure tenure in poor nation, fuelling costly social conflict*

Six weeks after global leaders promised to protect forests in their plans to slow climate change, experts will meet in London to examine what it will take to implement the commitment made at the UN climate conference in Paris, and how likely it is to succeed, given current trends.

On February 3, at the Royal Society in London, the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) will convene a panel of researchers, financial experts, indigenous leaders and other experts to report on the status of indigenous and community land rights worldwide. Their findings will reveal promising movement on land rights covering millions of hectares in a handful of countries, while suggesting that several influential governments in Latin America and Africa show signs of backsliding. A second analysis suggests that insecure tenure represents a poorly recognized but important source of risk to investors in developing and emerging market economies.

Additional research to be released at the event will look at conservation efforts that would establish large protected areas in the forests of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Liberia at the expense of the people who live in and depend on these forests. The two projects would cause the forced relocation of thousands of people, removing the chief protectors of two of Africa's most endangered landscapes—a consequence of conserving the forests without consideration of the people who live there.

More than 50 percent of global land mass is claimed or inhabited by 1.5 billion Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, but a global baseline study released by RRI last year suggests they have legal ownership rights to only 10 percent. This represents a significant gap between the lands Indigenous Peoples manage in practice and those to which they have legal rights.

### **WHAT:**

- Release of research analysing ownership and management rights for 33 low- or middle-income nations containing most of the world's tropical forests.
- Release of complementary research determining the cost of relocating tens of thousands of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities so that protected areas can be established in forests in Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

- Research demonstrating the extent to which insecure tenure represents a poorly recognized but important source of risk to investors in developing and emerging market economies.
- Panel discussion reviewing the progress and setbacks for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in obtaining ownership rights to the lands where they live.

**WHO:**

- **Nora Bowier**, Coordinator, Sustainable Development Institute, Liberia
- **Joan Carling**, Secretary General, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), Philippines
- **Mark Eckstein**, Director, Environmental and Social Responsibility, CDC Group, UK
- **Lou Munden**, Founder, TMP Systems, UK
- **Rukka Sombolinggi**, Deputy to Secretary General, Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN), Indonesia
- **Victoria Tauli-Corpuz**, UN Rapporteur for Indigenous Rights, Philippines
- **Andy White**, Coordinator, Rights and Resources Initiative, USA

**WHERE:**

Royal Society—Kohn Centre, 6-9 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AG, United Kingdom

**WHEN:**

09:30 GMT–12:00 GMT, 3 February 2016

**WHY:**

The year 2015 was a study in contrasts. National governments met in Paris under the auspices of the United Nations and reached consensus on a framework for combatting climate change that embraced the importance of conserving tropical forests. But the agreement did not address the rights of the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities who live in or near the tropical forests and whose livelihoods depend on these lands.

Studies have shown that Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities outperform all other managers of forests, keeping the carbon in the trees and ground and thus slowing climate change. But these communities often lack the legal rights to their lands and often are pushed aside by the exploitive development of natural resources, including mines, palm oil plantations and timber concessions.

The RRI panel will meet during a week of meetings in London that represent the full spectrum of forces at work to advance land rights for indigenous and other traditional communities worldwide. Described below, the three events convening in London, which are by invitation only, will bring together a broad partnership of indigenous coalitions and land rights and research organizations, as well as individuals from leading companies, investors, international organizations and civil society groups.

- Launched in November 2015, [LandMark](#) is the first online, interactive global platform to map lands collectively held and used by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. The platform was created to fill a critical gap in indigenous and community rights and make clear that these lands are not vacant, idle or available to outsiders.
- First convened by RRI in 2013, the [Interlaken Group](#) is a multi-stakeholder forum composed of individuals from leading companies, investors, international organizations and civil society groups, whose discussions focus on insecure land tenure in land acquisitions and the particular roles of companies and investors in addressing these challenges while protecting the rights and livelihoods of existing rights holders. In the past, representatives from the following organizations have participated in the Interlaken Group process: Nestlé, Stora

Enso, Rio Tinto, Coca-Cola, Unilever, IFC, Rabobank, TMP Systems, Oxfam, Global Witness, RRI, ERM, The Forest Trust, Landesa, Forest Peoples Programme, Olam, Omidyar Network and Dfid. The meetings are held under the Chatham House Rule.

- [The Tenure Facility](#) supports Indigenous Peoples, civil society organizations prioritizing areas where local peoples' rights are under threat, and where there is a real opportunity to advance local tenure. Despite progress in some countries, the rate of land-grabbing, and the murders of local activists continue to increase. Indigenous and community leaders who attempt to stop deforestation and water pollution are increasingly criminalized. Despite many efforts to assist indigenous and local communities, The Tenure Facility is the first and only international mechanism whose focus is to support these groups in their struggle to get their land and forest land rights recognized on maps, in laws, and in the plans and operations of governments and private investors everywhere.

To schedule an interview with a speaker at the February 3 conference, please contact:

- Jenna DiPaolo Colley at +1 202-412-0331 or [JDiPaolo@rightsandresources.org](mailto:JDiPaolo@rightsandresources.org)
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The Rights and Resources Initiative is a coalition of 13 core Partners who conduct work in specific areas of their regional and thematic expertise. Their mission is to support local communities' and Indigenous Peoples' struggles against poverty and marginalization by promoting greater global commitment and action towards policy, market and legal reforms that secure their rights to own, control and benefit from natural resources, especially land and forests. For more, visit the RRI website at [www.rightsandresources.org](http://www.rightsandresources.org).