



GLOBAL
ALLIANCE OF
TERRITORIAL
COMMUNITIES



“Strengthening and promoting the involvement of Indigenous and local community women of Central Africa and the Congo Basin in biodiversity conservation and climate resilience.”

MAY 8–12, 2023
Brazzaville, République du Congo

The First Subregional Forum of
Indigenous and Local Community Women
in Central Africa and the Congo Basin

DECLARATION

In 2023, from May 8 to 12, the First Subregional Forum of Indigenous and Local Community Women of Central Africa and the Congo Basin was held in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo.

The Forum was held under the patronage of the Keeper of the Seals, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and the Promotion of Indigenous Peoples of the Republic of Congo. It was organized by the Network of Indigenous and Local Populations for the sustainable management of Forest Ecosystems in Central Africa (REPALEAC) with the support of Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), the Forest Commission of Central Africa (COMIFAC), and other international partners. The Forum was chaired by the Minister of Forest Economy of the Republic of Congo, Patron and Ambassador of Indigenous Women in Central Africa.

Some 200 Indigenous and local community women leaders from 20 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America participated in the Forum. They came from: Burundi, Brazil, Canada, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Philippines, Panama, Peru, Republic of Congo, and Rwanda. In addition to these REPALEAC Network leaders, representatives from the RRI coalition, the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities (GATC), the Women in Global South Alliance for tenure and climate (WiGSA), as well as donors and development partners also took part in the conference.

In accordance with:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948;

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the United Nations in 1979;

The Solemn Declaration for Gender Equality in Africa (DSEGA) adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union in 2004;

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of September 13, 2007;

The Framework and Guidelines on Land Policies in Africa: A framework for strengthening land rights, improving productivity and livelihoods, 2010;

The commitment made at the Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework (COP15) to preserve nature and halt biodiversity loss in order to ensure the recovery of natural environments by 2050;

The declaration of the World Alliance of Local Authorities on the sidelines of COP27, calling for an adequate and equitable percentage of financing for climate and biodiversity, given the major role played by Indigenous Peoples and local communities in preserving the climate, for which tropical forests contribute up to 26% of carbon dioxide sequestration; and

Note on Cover Image: Participants gather for a photo on the last day of the Forum at the Grand Lancaster Hotel in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo. Photo: Nicole Harris for RRI.

The Women in Global South Alliance for tenure and climate's Call to Action on the sidelines of COP27 for governments, donors, and allies to consider what else they can do to recognize and support the valuable roles and contributions of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community women in efforts to achieve sustainable development and climate-related goals. There is a need for action on gender equality and gender justice, and for urgent and direct funding for groups, organizations, associations, and collectives of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local community women in the Global South, which have been historically under-supported and under-funded.

Whereas:

COP26 demonstrated the need to support women and girls who have always been on the frontline of the climate crisis.

Following the debates held during this Forum, the participants recognize that:

The traditional, semi-nomadic way of life of Indigenous Peoples alternates between mobility and sedentarization, and is therefore governed by a system of security based on collective ownership;

The notion of community conserved areas/Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) and Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs) are essential to achieving the 30x30 objectives for the protection of the planet; and that ICCAs and OECMs are not currently recognized by the legislation of many countries in Central Africa and the Congo Basin;

The exploitation and extraction of natural resources and fortress conservation continue to limit Indigenous and local community women's access to their means of subsistence, and are at the root of land tenure insecurity and conflicts of all kinds;

Direct access to climate finance for organizations led by Indigenous and local community women remains low, inequitable, and subject to excessively complex procedures;

Women have unique knowledge and a singular impact on the protection of territories, and that biodiversity conservation is structured around traditions, local languages, practices, customs, myths, cults, and spirits;

Support for the livelihoods of Indigenous and local community women and girls deserves greater commitment from donors;

Current education systems and public policies are incompatible with the realities and lifestyles of Indigenous and local women and girls;

The public health system and related policies do not take sufficient account of the lifestyles and needs of Indigenous populations;

The multiple structural and systemic discriminations of which women in general, and Indigenous women in particular, are victims prevent them from leading a dignified life and asserting their rights fully and effectively; and

The documentation of traditional knowledge and its transmission to present and future generations is an essential condition for the conservation of biodiversity by Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Taking into account the above, the members of REPALEAC and by means of this Declaration:

We invite donors, technical and financial partners, governments, private institutes, and multilateral public and private organizations to join REPALEAC and RRI through partnerships to work together to finance and implement the Roadmap established during this Forum.

The four (4) priority axes identified during this Forum are:

- Strengthen the technical and institutional capacities of formal and informal grassroots organizations, associations, and networks of Indigenous and local community women;
- Facilitate access to direct funding for organizations led by Indigenous and local community women;
- Support economic activities implemented by Indigenous local community women in the context of resilience and that do not harm the integrity of forests; and
- Monitor and evaluate progress in implementing the Roadmap and share lessons learned.

For their part, the organizations representing Indigenous Peoples and local communities undertake to support and promote the implementation of the Roadmap, and to contribute to ensuring the highest degree of governance.

Furthermore, we invite states, development partners, regional intergovernmental agencies, REPALEAC, donors, the private sector, and civil society to strengthen and promote the engagement of Indigenous and local community women and girls in Central Africa in biodiversity conservation and climate resilience by establishing a sustainable support mechanism for them, in line with REPALEAC's 2018–2025 strategic framework.

We, the Indigenous and local women of Central Africa and the Congo Basin, reaffirm our readiness to collaborate with the policies of our respective countries, subregional organizations, technical and financial partners, and the international community in biodiversity conservation and climate resilience.

In conclusion, we, the Indigenous and local women of Central Africa and the Congo Basin, gathered today, May 12, 2023, in the conference room of the Grand Lancaster Hotel in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, surrounded by our sisters and brothers, our financial and technical partners, and our Godmother, mandate REPALEAC to ensure the implementation of the recommendations of this Forum and express our wish to hold the Second Forum of Indigenous and Local Community Women of Central Africa and the Congo Basin in 2024.

In addition, in order to follow up on the commitment to mobilize support funds for the implementation of the Roadmap of the First Subregional Forum of Indigenous and Local Community Women in Central Africa and the Congo Basin for biodiversity conservation and climate resilience, REPALEAC and the Forum participants appoint Mr. Casey Box, Director of Global Strategy at the Christensen Fund, and Dr. Solange Bandiaky-Badji, Coordinator of the Rights and Resources Initiative, as mediators with donors.

Signed in Brazzaville on May 12, 2023

Signed:

The Participants



GLOBAL ALLIANCE OF TERRITORIAL COMMUNITIES



*Participants gather for a photo on the last day of the Forum at the Grand Lancaster Hotel in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo.
Photo: Nicole Harris for RRI.*

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DECLARATION