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Press Release

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Contact: Debra Harry, dharry@ipcb.org
or Le`a Malia Kanehe, lkanehe@ipcb.org

UN Convention on Biological Diversity Ignores Indigenous Peoples' Rights to Genetic Resources and Knowledge

(Geneva, Switzerland) Representatives from Indigenous rights organizations, express grave concern with the on-going negotiations of parties to the UN Convention as they elaborate and negotiate an international regime on access and benefit sharing from the commercial exploitation of genetic resources and traditional knowledge. Indigenous peoples hold inherent and paramount rights of over much of the subject matter, specifically genetic resources and Indigenous knowledge, under negotiation in the CBD, and such rights have been recognized in international human rights law, to which Parties are obliged to uphold.

Such rights have been clearly articulated in the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples' Rights, particularly Article 26, which recognizes our ownership over and right to control the use of genetic resources originating in our territories, lands, and waters. It is now time for the Convention on Biological Diversity to advance from 1992 to 2008. Our rights as peoples are accepted as customary international law. Accordingly, the CBD must be interpreted and implemented in accordance with this body of international human rights law.

As the rights holders to the traditional knowledge and genetic resources originating in our lands and territories we will continue to defend our fundamental human right of self-determination under international law and the corresponding right of permanent sovereignty over natural resources. These rights form the basis upon which Indigenous peoples assert our proprietary, inherent, and inalienable rights over our Indigenous knowledge and natural resources, including genetic resources.

Indigenous peoples believe the discussions on an international regime for access and benefit sharing are a thin disguise for the exploitation of genetic resources and traditional knowledge in the name of fair and equitable sharing of benefits. We are renewing our call to Indigenous peoples to assert their legal and human rights to protect their resources and knowledge by all possible means. Their rights are not going to be recognized or respected here at the CBD.

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Endorsing Organizations & Contacts:

- Indigenous Peoples Council on Biocolonialism (USA) (Debra Harry – dharry@ipcb.org)
- International Indian Treaty Council (Estebancio Castro Diaz – estebancio@treatycouncil.org)
- Pacific Indigenous Peoples Environment Coalition (PIPEC) (Malia Talakai – maliatalakai@gmail.com)
- Latin American and Caribbean Regional Indigenous Caucus (Maria Eugenia Choque – choque17@hotmail.com)
- Foundation for the Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge (masardule@gmail.com)
- Parakuiyo Pastoralists Indigenous Community (Adam Ole Mwaaburu)
- Abya Yala Indigenous Women's Network on Biodiversity (Florina Lopez – kuna_09@hotmail.com)
- Asociaain IXACAVAA (Ester Camac – ecamac@gmail.com)