New Report: Despite Improved Recognition of Indigenous Peoples, Fragmented Rio Conventions Limit Indigenous Influence

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Fragmentation and barriers to Indigenous Peoplesâ?? access to decision making reduce the effectiveness of U.N. conventions on climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation, but can be addressed through action by nation-states, funders, and others

SEATTLE, Aug. 13, 2026 /PRNewswire/ â?? A new report from Nia Tero â?? an international non-profit focused on strengthening Indigenous Peoplesâ?? guardianship of ancestral lands and waters â?? examines how fragmentation across the Rio Conventions limits Indigenous Peoplesâ?? meaningful influence in global environmental decision-making.

The report, â??Beyond Fragmentation: Advancing Coherence, Equity, and Indigenous Leadership Across the Rio Conventions,â?• will formally launch at the 17th Conference of the Parties to the U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), taking place from August 17 to 28 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, at a side event focused on strengthening coherence across the Rio Conventions.

The three Rio Conventions â?? the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) â?? emerged from the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

They are the main global frameworks addressing biodiversity loss, climate change, and land degradation, environmental crises that Indigenous Peoples have long perceived as interconnected.

â??For Indigenous Peoples, climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation are deeply connected and result from an imbalanced relationship between people and the earth. However, the three Rio Conventions address these issues separately, making it harder for Indigenous representatives to participate in meaningful ways,â?• said Minnie Degawan (Kankanaey-Igorot, Philippines), Indigenous policy expert and author of the report.

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Drawing on two years of dialogue with Indigenous leaders and representatives, as well as observations from negotiations and institutional analysis, the report offers recommendations for States, Convention secretariats, funders, and Indigenous caucuses to strengthen coordination and ensure Indigenous Peoplesâ?? knowledge, priorities, and leadership help shape global environmental governance.

With all three Rio Conventions holding conferences in 2026, the report points to a rare opportunity to align global action on interconnected environmental crises.

Key Findings from the Report

â??As proven guardians of many of the worldâ??s remaining large, intact ecosystems, Indigenous Peoplesâ?? leadership is essential to addressing the combined environmental crises humanity is facing,â?• said Margarita Mora, Nia Tero Chief Programs Officer. â??The Rio Conventions must move beyond recognition and participation to ensure Indigenous Peoples can meaningfully shape decisions, implementation, and financing.â?•

The full report is available at: www.niatero.org/RioReport

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About Nia Tero

Nia Tero is a leading international organization whose sole focus is advancing Indigenous Peoplesâ?? guardianship of ancestral lands, waters, and the ocean. We provide direct support to Indigenous Peoplesâ?? guardianship and elevate the role and influence of Indigenous Peoples as essential to ensuring planetary health and habitability. Learn more at: www.niatero.org

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