

Press Release

Mobile Indigenous Peoples at the IUCN Vth World Parks Congress Announce the creation of a World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples

Durban, South Africa
16 September 2003

Mobile Indigenous Peoples at the Vth World Parks Congress (WPC) in Durban have established the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples. Their vision is to establish solidarity among mobile indigenous peoples worldwide; enhance complementarity with other societies; promote just policies leading to freedom of movement, and respect for the rights of, mobile indigenous peoples, and achieve sustainable livelihoods in balance with nature.

The WPC created a unique opportunity for nomads, pastoralists, shifting agriculturalists and hunter-gatherers to come together to share strategies for managing natural resources and conserving biodiversity, and to articulate the common problems we face as mobile indigenous peoples. Our recommendations on Mobile Indigenous Peoples and Conservation (5.27) for the Durban Accord and Plan of Action were adopted by the Congress by consensus. We also fully share and endorse the recommendations adopted at this Congress on Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas (5.24).

The mobile indigenous peoples present at the V World Parks Congress likewise urge governments to adopt before the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples currently under discussion at the United Nations Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights (Geneva, 15-26 September 2003), and send a message of support to our indigenous brothers and sisters present at the Working Group.

Our mobility is a way of life that holds both a management strategy for sustainable land use and conservation, and is a distinct source of our cultural identity, our connection with our past and our livelihoods. As such, we have special needs due to our mobility and we share many problems in common:

- Policies of sedentarisation are a threat to mobile indigenous peoples' cultural identity, to our capacity to manage land properly and lead to poverty.
- There are strong links between the lifestyle of mobile indigenous peoples and biodiversity.
- Mobile indigenous peoples have our own institutions, leadership, decision-making mechanisms, sanctions and law.
- The right to maintain our own social structures and norms should be respected, and those who want social services should be given equal access in culturally appropriate ways.
- Mobile indigenous peoples have flexible and adaptive management systems requiring movement across different ecological zones and sometimes transboundary movement.
- The rights of mobile indigenous peoples in many countries have been abused, including rights to our culture, to maintain control and access to our resources, and our right to mobility.

We are grateful to the organizers of this Congress for offering Mobile Indigenous Peoples this historic opportunity to convene, and we look forward to fruitful collaboration with all concerned organisations and governments to promote conservation of biodiversity hand in hand with sustainable livelihoods, human rights and the cultures of indigenous peoples.