



**THE HE SAPA  
RESOLUTION 1**

As amended and accepted by contact groups on the 29th and 30th August 2024

**On Sovereignty and Wilderness: Deepening the Wilderness Concept Through  
Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom**

**PREAMBLE**

Given the reality that wild nature on land, water, and sea is fast disappearing and is an irreplaceable necessity for the health and well-being of all life, we recognize the urgent need for all people to have a common language that can support a call-to-action for the preservation of Earth's biosphere. To generate this consistency, the Westernized concept of 'wilderness' needs to evolve, deepen, and strengthen through recognizing and reflecting Indigenous science, knowledge, thought, and wisdom. The He Sapa Declaration, upon which this resolution is based, provides more context, and asks no tribe, nation, or person to replace their word for free nature. It asks that the evolved concept of wilderness called for in this resolution – one that acknowledges the sovereignty of all lifeforms and is inclusive of Indigenous perspectives -- be accepted and used by Western conservation to assist with keeping nature whole, and in our collective action to safeguard the sacred, biodiverse, and sovereign nature of life on Earth.

**WHEREAS**

Acknowledging that many protected wilderness and other natural areas were established on lands that were and/or remain sovereign territories of Indigenous Nations; that some protected and wilderness areas were achieved in ways problematic and harmful to Indigenous peoples; and that genuine healing and reconciliation is required .

Understanding the need to adhere to Indigenous rights as enunciated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), as a baseline, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (especially Article 8(j)), and also to the universal need for humans to respect and act responsibly to each other and all life on Earth.

Acknowledging that many Indigenous Peoples have kept and keep wild places healthy and intact while also acknowledging Western conservation has done the same in many instances.

Accepting fully that Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Systems (IKWS) contain specific, place-based information, management wisdom, law, policy, and guidance.

Acknowledging that both traditional Indigenous and Western sciences are both critical informants of a more holistic philosophy and practice of wilderness conservation.

Recognizing that the current ('western') wilderness concept and related policy (the international standard of which is called Category 1B and is the responsibility of the Wilderness Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas) requires more depth and strengthening through close collaboration with, understanding of, and integration (in word and thought) of Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Systems (IKWS).

Knowing that this resolution will help transform and strengthen the broader meaning of wilderness, and in turn also increases the likelihood that Indigenous Peoples and other 'non-western' cultures can more effectively communicate with each other and build collaborative management approaches.

**THEREFORE**

The delegates to the 12th World Wilderness Congress (WILD12), convening in He Sapa, the Black Hills of the Oceti Sakowin Oyate are hereby

**RESOLVED**

That all relevant institutions, governments and civil society in all sectors at all levels:

- A. Include language and protocols for the recognition and implementation of and responsibilities to all life, and the recognition where relevant and possible of the decision-making governance systems of regional Indigenous communities, and do so before initiating any protection concept following at a minimum Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC); and throughout the process of designating wilderness or other protected areas on land, water and sea.
- B. Actively promote wilderness policy that acknowledges that nature is multi-dimensional, transcending the material and physical realms; and use language that honors the rights and roles of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Systems, natural and customary law.
- C. Elevate awareness of IUCN Wilderness Category 1B and associated guidelines within institutions, organizations, governments, nations, and the public at all levels as an opportunity for protected area designation and management in the future, and urge more comprehensive and far-reaching actions to initiate, integrate, and support Indigenous management or co-management and stewardship of these Category 1B Wilderness Protected Areas.
- D. Adhere to the inherent sovereignty and leadership of Indigenous Peoples' stewardship of nature necessary in order to achieve the international call for protecting 30% of Earth by 2030 as specified by the Kunming- Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and "at

least half or more<sup>1</sup>” recognized by IUCN Resolutions 125 and 129. Implement means for adhering to Indigenous science, knowledge, and wisdom and the best of contemporary science within a framework of legal pluralism.

- E. Ensure that networks of sacred natural sites and territories sustained by Indigenous Peoples and others for ceremonial purposes, and for their intrinsic value, are a recognized part of wilderness and/or in another relevant, distinct category of protected areas.
- F. Actively and publicly support and collaborate with Indigenous Peoples so that they can stay on their lands, should they wish, and prioritize the defense of their sovereignty, traditional lifeways, and the land, waters, and seas upon which they depend.

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<sup>1</sup> International Union for Conservation of Nature. (2020). WCC-2020-Res-125-EN: Setting area-based conservation targets based on evidence of what nature and people need to thrive. IUCN.  
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