

PROMOTING SYNERGIES WITH INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SDGs

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Thank you for the invitation to participate in this planning workshop for STI 2019. The importance of ensuring that the knowledge systems of indigenous peoples is taken into consideration in the achievement of the SDG's could not be over emphasized. Indigenous Peoples are key, not only in achieving sustainable development, but also in addressing the many issues that we currently face today such as climate change.

There is a growing body of work that recognizes that the indigenous knowledge systems of indigenous peoples in managing natural resources (be these be forests or marine resources) are effective in combatting climate change. It is also a fact that these knowledge systems have allowed for the survival of many communities for generations despite tremendous odds. It is therefore important that these systems be acknowledged and given the same important as other knowledge systems.

This year has been designated by the UN General Assembly as the International Year of Indigenous Languages. Language, as we all know is the conduit by which knowledge is passed on. It is no different for indigenous peoples, we rely on our languages to transfer knowledge to our children and like any other aspect of our cultures, our languages, emanate from our unique relationship with our environment. And because it is closely associated with nature, our cultures and languages incorporate the value of sustainable use.

However, our languages are also threatened. With the loss of our natural environment due to so-called development projects, climate change and unjust policies (such as education policies), our languages are fast disappearing. Many indigenous youth are no longer able to speak fluently the languages of their ancestors. The loss of a language is similar to the loss of an entire library. While some concepts could be recalled and described in another language, there are values that do not translate the same.

Hence, this designation by the UN for 2019 as International Year of Indigenous Languages is an important opportunity to create synergies with other initiatives such as the SDGs.

Languages, as I stated before is the conduit by which knowledge can be transmitted. If we are to ensure that science and technology benefit from the unique knowledge systems of indigenous peoples, we have to ensure that indigenous languages are protected and allowed to prosper. Indigenous languages, and their speakers, need to be part of the discussions.

Concretely, the following can be done:

- 1> STI Forum 2019 can have a dedicated panel with indigenous knowledge holders who can share their won experiences in utilizing science and technology for their communities;
- 2> A dialogue between different knowledge holders in order to understand different perspectives;
- 3> The expert panel members of STI can interact with the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (April 22 – May 2) which would enable them to learn more from a bug group of indigenous representatives;

There are many opportunities within the UN system for closer collaboration and these should be maximized. For instance under the UNFCCC there is the newly formed Local Communities Indigenous Peoples Platform designed to allow for greater participation by local communities and indigenous peoples in climate change discussions as well as to ensure that their traditional knowledge systems are incorporated in climate actions. It would be a good start of the STI Forum interacts with this body.

Thank you.