

For Immediate Distribution, 9/12/2015  
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## **For Indigenous Peoples at COP21, the Struggle Continues**

**Paris, France** - During the first week of the UN Climate Change Conference, Indigenous Peoples representatives advocating for the recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the proposed binding Agreement faced considerable challenges. A delegation of over 200 indigenous Peoples representatives including Tribal leaders, elders, community organizers, and youth overcame strong resistance by some States to include the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the draft Agreement's preamble. In order to deal effectively with the global climate crises, however, the delegation, representing Indigenous Peoples from around the world, continues to demand that the recognition of their rights be featured in the operative section of the final COP21 Agreement.

Serious obstacles remain as the phrase "the rights of Indigenous Peoples" was removed from the COP21 draft Agreement's operative paragraph 2, although it is currently retained in an associated annex. In a concerted effort to deal with this injustice, the delegation continues to engage in an intense advocacy effort with State parties, as well as organize on and off site actions, informative events, and press conferences.

A member of the Indigenous Yaqui Nation, Andrea Carmen stated that "Indigenous Peoples have been severely impacted by the main cause of climate change, which is fossil fuel extraction carried out on our lands without our free prior and informed consent. That makes it essential that our rights are fully respected in this Agreement and in the implementation of real solutions for the survival of our future generations". The Executive Director of the International Indian Treaty Council, Carmen is also a member of the Global Steering Committee for the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change, the group that facilitated Indigenous Peoples participation at COP21 via regional processes called "The Road to Paris Initiative."

Another Indigenous delegate participating through this initiative, Wahleah Johns of the Black Mesa Water Coalition expressed that the coordinated efforts being carried out by Indigenous Peoples inside the conference at COP 21 has made a significant impact: "As a tribal member of the Navajo Nation and a part of the Global Indigenous Peoples Caucus in Paris, I can see that our presence is critical to ensure that the rights of Indigenous Peoples are included in this legally-binding Climate Agreement".

In affirmation of these efforts, Ambassador Luis Alfonso De Alba of Mexico announced Tuesday night that he is initiating a "Group of Friends" to work to ensure that Human Rights, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples are included in Conference's the final Agreement. De Alba's initiative was welcomed by Indigenous Peoples and supported by a number of State Parties including Peru, Costa Rica, Chile, Philippines, Palau, and Luxemburg as a representative of the European Union. The Indigenous Peoples Caucus is now awaiting the release of the latest COP21 draft document scheduled for released at 1pm.

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