

VISION AND AGENDA FOR SECURING LAND RIGHTS TO ADVANCE THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of ending poverty and hunger, advancing gender equality, reducing inequality, as well as confronting climate change, reducing conflict globally, and conserving forests and ecosystems, more concerted and coordinated action is needed. Securing community rights to their lands and natural resources is key to making progress on each of these Goals. To ensure that no one is left behind, particular effort is required to secure the rights of Indigenous Peoples and women, who are often the most marginalized in rural societies.

Today, nearly a third of the world's population lacks secure rights to the lands and forests they customarily claim and have historically used and protected. These Indigenous Peoples and rural communities customarily own and manage more than half the world's lands and forests. Inadequate recognition of these rights, and other human rights, and constraints on the ability of communities to effectively exercise their rights endangers the livelihoods and survival of communities and thus puts at risk the sustained protection of the natural resources, forests, and waters we all depend on for human development and global environmental sustainability. The lack of recognition and support also makes these lands and forests vulnerable to unregulated exploitation, feeding corruption. By contrast, communities and Indigenous Peoples with secure rights to their forestlands have lower deforestation rates and, by protecting their forests, help protect our climate.

These challenges are particularly acute for women. Despite facing historic injustice in both security of land rights and land governance, they are increasingly becoming the leading managers and political defenders of forests and lands across the world. This means that advancing the equal rights and voice of women is not only a global imperative for gender justice and women's socioeconomic advancement, but is also one of the most promising paths to protect forests and rural landscapes as well as advance inclusive development and social stability.

Secure land rights have been a cornerstone of social, economic, and environmental stability as well as equitable economic progress for centuries, providing the foundation underpinning the development of democracy, sustained peace, and shared prosperity across many parts of the world. Today, securing the rights and livelihoods of communities, especially of women in communities, and of Indigenous Peoples, in order to support sustainable resource use, enable responsible investment, and prevent illegal land use, constitutes one of the most pressing and necessary steps to achieving global progress toward sustainable and equitable development.

In recent years, there has been strong global commitment to address insecure community land rights—demonstrated by the endorsement of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which celebrated its 10th year anniversary in September 2017; international human rights treaties; the Committee on Food Security's Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT), endorsed in 2012; and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), endorsed in 2015. Securing Indigenous Peoples' and communities' land rights is also recognized as a strategy within the New York Declaration on Forests in 2014; and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agreement in Paris in 2015. More than 600 organizations and communities worldwide have endorsed the Global Call to Action on Indigenous and Community Land Rights, launched in 2013.

This progress is due primarily to the leadership and courage of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who though facing considerable ongoing challenges, are increasingly recognized and empowered as the leading defenders of forests and natural resources. This progress on the international policy front has been met by important gains in recent years in many countries, with a growing number of governments advancing new land policies and legal frameworks. Leading corporations and investors are also beginning to adjust their investment practices and business operations. And the international community is developing new initiatives to provide support to advance and accelerate the implementation of these commitments. There is also an emerging suite of international instruments that permit the scaling-up of international effort, including new funding mechanisms, new networks to engage investors and companies, platforms to facilitate strategic coordination, and ambitious campaigns to raise awareness and achieve impact.

The **Interlaken Group** is an informal network of leaders from companies, civil society organizations, Indigenous Peoples organizations, and public and private investors who are focused on expanding and leveraging private sector action to secure community land rights. While the Group sees these positive steps as promising, it realizes that they remain insufficient to address the global challenges we now face. More is needed from all parties, including companies, governments, investors, international development institutions, Indigenous Peoples, communities, and civil society to scale-up and implement commitments on the ground. Without greater global effort and coordination, the opportunity to make real progress toward the SDGs, climate commitments, and global peace and prosperity will be missed, and windows of opportunity to secure communities' remaining lands, forests, and waters will be lost.

This vision and agenda aims to reinforce global awareness and scale-up global efforts to advance the implementation of commitments to secure collective land rights on the ground, and thereby help achieve the SDGs. It aims to foster greater effort and collaboration in the spirit of the global goal on partnerships - SDG 17 - and contribute to its realization.

The Interlaken Group thus urges all actors in the global community to encourage governments, companies, international organizations, and NGOs to:

- 1.** Scale-up efforts to secure community land rights and strengthen communities' ability to exercise their rights to govern and manage their lands and forests, especially those of Indigenous Peoples and women, by aligning their actions with the UN VGGT, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, UNDRIP, and other international agreements securing tenure rights including the SDGs, the New York Declaration on Forests, and the Paris Climate Agreement;
- 2.** Fulfill their commitments to implement FPIC and other participatory consultative protocols in advance of the allocation or approval of any use of lands set aside for forest protection, conservation, natural resource extraction, agricultural, forestry or infrastructure development, and otherwise fully respect Indigenous Peoples' and communities' rights, and especially women's rights within communities;
- 3.** Acknowledge and fairly address legacy land issues in existing enterprise concessions and conservation areas; and promote rights-based and inclusive business models;
- 4.** Strengthen existing instruments and initiatives by increasing investments to secure land rights, and by enhancing coordination and collaboration between all stakeholders to optimize efficiency, leverage, and impact for the benefit of communities first, as well as for companies and governments; and
- 5.** Improve coordination and collaboration to support the above goals; continuously monitor and report to relevant global for a on progress achieved in securing tenure rights for rural communities, Indigenous Peoples, and women within those communities, using established baselines.