

## TFS Op Ed-Blog from the GCF Global Committee for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

We come to California from the Brazilian, Peruvian, and Ecuadorean Amazon, and from other forested regions of the world where there are tropical forests, including Mexico. We come from remote places where pressures on the forest, such as fires and land invasions, are threatening our lands, our livelihoods, and our very way of life. We have left our homes, our families, and our jobs to travel thousands of miles to address the members of California's Air Resources Board (ARB) as they consider the Tropical Forest Standard this week. We are here to ask the ARB members—and our Indigenous brothers and sisters who are gathered here in California this week—for their help, their solidarity, and their support in halting tropical deforestation. We are here to urge you to partner with us—to respect our realities and our needs.

As members of the [Governors' Climate & Forests \(GCF\) Task Force](#), we represent more than 33 percent of the tropical forests in the world. And we are not new to partnership efforts. In fact, for years, we have been establishing dialogues with governments and with members of the GCF Task Force, the largest subnational network for tropical forests in the world, which has a strong vision for the future of tropical forests. Just over one year ago, on September 11, 2018, the GCF Task Force held their Annual Meeting in San Francisco, California. During this meeting, a landmark moment took place.

In the GCF Task Force Annual Meeting, Indigenous leaders from Brazil, Peru, Indonesia, Mexico, and Ecuador brought an important and urgent request to the governmental members of the GCF Task Force: Endorse a set of [Guiding Principles of Collaboration and Partnership for Subnational Governments, Indigenous Peoples, and Local Communities](#), and commit to fighting tropical deforestation together. And they did. Thirty-five subnational governments, 18 Indigenous organizations, and 17 NGOs said *yes* to finding equitable and effective solutions to fighting deforestation and mitigating climate change. *Yes* to [protecting forests, to recognizing rights, to supporting indigenous and community livelihoods, and to protecting nature defenders as integral aspects of global action on climate change](#). We say *yes* to working together.

Later in the week last year, the endorsement of the Guiding Principles was celebrated at the closing ceremony of California's Global Climate Action Summit (GCAS) here in California. Civil servants, secretaries of the environment, Indigenous and local community leaders stood together on the GCAS stage, held hands, and affirmed their commitment to finding pathways and strategies to protect tropical forests by working closely with the people living under the canopy of these forests.

But these Guiding Principles are only effective if they are put into practice. This week, the California Air Resources Board has the opportunity to implement this practice—by voting to support the Tropical Forest Standard (TFS), a forward-thinking framework that includes the Guiding Principles.

We know the TFS won't resolve historical and grave social injustices suffered by Indigenous peoples and local communities defending tropical forests around the world. We also know that it will take extensive effort for tropical forest governments to actually partner with California—and perhaps they never will.

But we believe that the TFS is an important, much needed step toward collaborative governance, especially as it has adopted participatory forms in its construction. This is what we are asking for—collaborative governance that includes our voices and interests.

The TFS sets a high bar that can be adapted and adopted by other governments over time. It declares that California cares about forest conservation not only here in the United States, but in places as far away as the Amazon. If the TFS encourages our governments to adhere to these Guiding Principles, and, in turn, helps to unlock other sources of financing for the conservation and development that is so needed in tropical forest regions of the world, this is good for people and for the planet.

Most of all, endorsing the TFS signals to those of us living in tropical forest regions who deal with the realities of these places—with the threats of fires, poverty, discrimination and others—that we are not alone in our efforts to protect our forests and improve our livelihoods.

As partners in the GCF Task Force’s ongoing work to create meaningful, equitable, and effective collaborations between governments, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, we stand with California. Adopt the TFS today.

Signed:

**Julie Messais**, Executive Director, Institute of Climate Change, Acre, Brazil  
**Francisco Carlos da Silveira Cavalcanti**, President, Institute of Climate Change, Acre, Brazil  
**Francisca Arara**, Chief of Department of Climate Change, Acre, Brazil  
**Rafael Robles de Benito**, Climate Change Director, Quintana Roo State Government  
**Floriberto Vasquez Ruiz**, Undersecretary of Climate Change, Biodiversity & Natural Resources, Oaxaca, Mexico  
**Candido Mezua**, Secretary of International Relations for the Mesoamerican Alliance of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities  
**Basilio Velazquez Chi**, Representative of Community Production of the Mayan Zone  
**Oseas Barbarán Sanchez**, President of the Confederation of Amazonian Nationalities of Peru (CONAP)  
**Fermín Chimatani Tayori**, President of the National Association of Executive Administrative Contracts of the Communal Reserves of Peru (ANECAP)  
**Victor Galarreta**, GCF Task Force Peru Coordinator; Chairman of the Board, Alternate Development Mechanisms (MDA)  
**Laura Jimenez**, Representative of the Union of Community Forest Production Zapotecos-Chinantecos of the Sierra Juarez, Oaxaca  
**Tashkan Yawanawa**, Leader of the Yawanawa  
**Diana Pérez Juamá**, Undersecretary of Sustainable Planning in the Secretary of Sustainable Development of the State of Yucatán, Mexico

(Members and Participants in the GCF Task Force Global Committee on Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities)