

Thank you very much Mr. Moderator for this opportunity to bring local voices to global discourse. My topic today is Restoration and Indigenous Women.

Restoration refers to the process of managing or assisting the recovery of landscapes that have been degraded, damaged or destroyed more often than not by human activity. It's major aim is improving human well-being while reducing environmental risks and scarcities.

It must be understood that restoration was preceded by a process of degradation that was an inequitable, destructive and irresponsible use of the landscape motivated by greed. A selfish unquenchable desire to accumulate profit at all costs without due regard for the future generations.

- Inequitable because it has accumulated the great wealth and sophistication it created such as nuclear, electronic industries and sky scrapper cities in the hands of 1 % of the world population while it has handed the 90% remaining population food insecurity, abject poverty and a perpetual state of dependency on the 1 %.
- Destructive, because it has destroyed the values of the so called least developed regions of the world. It destroyed our traditional beliefs, culture, institutions, local practices and extended family networks that were our safety nets
- Irresponsible, because it has caused massive pollution and a monumental waste of natural resources.

Policies, laws and regulations that existed when the degradation process was taking place were clearly defective. It is imperative that they are assessed and reviewed. Restoration of global landscapes cannot play by the current rules. It is necessary to form new institutions and organizations which specifically take into account the specific concerns of the local communities, Indigenous Peoples and marginalized groups such as women, youths, people with disabilities and minorities. The new Policies Laws and Regulations must change the underlying rules systems and incentive structure in such a way that the process of restoration is gender responsive, participatory, transparent, inclusive and is accompanied by equitable share of benefits accruing from restoration of landscapes. Participation of women, recognizes that women are powerful agents of change and their leadership is critical in community revitalization and renewable natural resource management. Addressing gender issues during this process acknowledges that women and men have different roles and those roles shape their gendered needs, and consequently, equitable share of benefits and it highlights that both women and men's roles are equally important to realize restoration of global landscapes.

All policies in this regard must be gender responsive and redistributive, intended to transform existing gender relations. Both men and women must have equal access to, control of and decision making powers regarding productive resources. To this end all investments and interventions towards restoration need to conduct Gender Analyses and build a data bank of gender disaggregated data that is regularly updated with gender relations information, within the equal opportunities framework.

Restoration cannot pursue a scientific path alone. It needs to be carried out in ways that balance social, economic and environmental objectives, and that the engagement of all relevant stakeholders, for example land owners, and indigenous peoples and local communities is crucial at all stages of the restoration process.

Indigenous peoples and Local forest dependent communities must be recognized as rights-holders and not another category of stakeholders and forests as sovereign spaces rather than multi-stakeholder platforms. Any intervention to sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt biodiversity loss and halt and reverse land degradation must be a human rights based collaborative venture between the rights holders and stakeholders as partners.

- recognize customary tenure rights of indigenous and local communities
- Respect traditional and indigenous knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities to access genetic resources and cultural sites in terrestrial ecosystems gazette as reserve
- Avoiding involuntary resettlement of forest-dependent communities
- Encourage and facilitate the full and effective participation of rightsholders
- Uphold rights of indigenous peoples, to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)

We call upon governments to embrace their role of duty bearers rather than as one of many stakeholders, to ensure that the dignity of the custodians of terrestrial ecosystems is at the center of restoration of Global Land Scapes, and that everyone involved in this process has an equal opportunity. The State is duty bound to ensure that custodians of Terrestrial Ecosystems namely Local communities and Indigenous Peoples know their rights in this process.

All investment in all projects and interventions to restore global land scapes have to be responsible. Market based mechanisms such as REDD+ must be people centered, aimed at enhancing adaptation to climate change and the resilience of communities more than profits.

Every investment must be a collaboration between the rights holder and stakeholder and carry a Dedicated Grant for Local communities and Indigenous People, accessible to both men and women, to engage in the investment and share the benefits that accrue thereof.

A clearly spelt out and effective grievance redress mechanism must be put in place to arbitrate in conflicts that may ensue in the process of restoration.

Follow up and review cannot only look at the hardware, the quantitative, the number of landscapes restored. It must also look at the software, the qualitative, the impact restoration has had on the People e.g how many have been evicted from the forests, what effect has it had on their livelihoods, etc.