Declaration of Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and Afro-descendant Peoples on Fire

Antalya, Türkiye, November 2026

a. Preamble

1. We, the representatives of Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities (IPLCs), and Afro-descendant Peoples from diverse territories around the world, gathered in Antalya, Türkiye, at the 31st United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP31), hereby adopt this Global Indigenous Declaration on Fire (the Declaration).

2. Each People and Community has a distinct relationship with fire, shaped by its worldview, territory, and cultural practices. Fire has a sacred and spiritual dimension, accompanying ceremonies and practices that protect, cleanse and regenerate our ecosystems. It also sustains community life and livelihoods through warmth, light and food, and serves as an ancestral technology for caring for and managing our territories. We recognise our ancestral knowledge of fire as a shared, living heritage transmitted, practised, and adapted across generations, and it must not be privatised or commodified. We affirm the rights of our Peoples and Communities to protect our knowledge and practices from unauthorised use, appropriation or transfer.

3. This Declaration is a collective exercise of our right to self-determination. It draws on international human rights instruments, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, ILO Convention No. 169 and the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, alongside the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Paris Agreement.

4. We recognise international efforts to strengthen fire governance and integrated fire management. These efforts underscore the need for comprehensive approaches, effective participation, and recognition of IPLCs' and Afro-descendant Peoples' ancestral knowledge. Our Declaration contributes our collective voice and territorial leadership to this work.

5. The climate crisis, land dispossession, deforestation, land-use change and extractive and illicit activities are increasing the vulnerability of our territories to destructive fires. These pressures threaten biodiversity, health, livelihoods and our biocultural and ethnosocial heritage. Integrated fire management must address these underlying drivers of fire risk, while respecting our rights and the diversity of our territories.

b. Our commitments

6. In response to these challenges, we, IPLCs and Afro-descendant Peoples, commit to advancing integrated fire management through preventive, adaptive and intercultural approaches that recognise our ancestral knowledge and practices related to fire, through the following commitments:

7. To preserve, revitalise and pass on our knowledge systems, languages, ceremonies and cultural practices related to fire to present and future generations. We will support intergenerational learning, recognise the roles of elders, women, young people and children in transmitting and sustaining these knowledge systems, and document knowledge where our Peoples and Communities choose to do so, while respecting our own protocols and restrictions on sharing.

8. To strengthen our own governance systems and community fire plans, guided by the knowledge, authorities, protocols and needs of each territory. Cultural burning is rooted in our cultural relationships with fire and governed by our own knowledge and authorities. We recognise that different fire practices, including cultural, ecological,

agricultural, landscape and prescribed burning, may serve different purposes and reflect different territorial contexts. We will select burning practices, firebreaks, and other techniques based on local ecological conditions, cultural protocols, and safety requirements, rather than assuming any technique is suitable everywhere. We will respect the diversity of our Peoples and Communities, including the rights and territories of Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation.

9. To strengthen cooperation and practical exchanges among IPLCs and Afro-descendant Peoples through networks for learning, solidarity and territorial fire governance. We will share experiences in community fire planning, prevention, restoration and response, respecting the protocols and conditions established by our Peoples and Communities for sharing knowledge.

10. To strengthen inclusive participation in our own fire governance and planning processes, respecting our forms of organisation and authorities. We will support the participation of women, men, older people, persons with disabilities, young people and migrants in culturally appropriate ways, and promote our full and effective participation in wider fire management decisions.

11. To promote the responsible and equitable use of Earth observation, remote sensing, geographic information systems, early warning systems and other technologies for integrated fire management. We will seek partnerships that build our capacity to generate, interpret and use information, and ensure that technologies, information and benefits are accessible, useful and responsive to the needs of our Peoples and Communities.

12. To uphold community control over traditional knowledge and territorial data, preventing their unauthorised use, appropriation or transfer. We will establish or strengthen protocols for collecting, accessing, sharing, and governing information; protect sensitive knowledge; and require partnerships to respect our collective rights, our governance systems, and free, prior, and informed consent where applicable. Documentation or technology use must not imply consent to disclose or transfer our knowledge.

13. To promote dialogue on an equal footing between ancestral knowledge, science and other knowledge systems, and jointly develop solutions that respond to our needs and challenges, strengthening climate resilience and care for our territories. These solutions must support good living, understood here as a culturally grounded understanding of collective well-being and harmonious relationships with the territory, as expressed by each People and Community.

14. To develop collaborative financing and fundraising arrangements that support our fire governance initiatives and capacities. We will identify shared priorities, seek equitable access to resources and promote transparency and accountability in accordance with our governance systems.

15. To establish, subject to the signatories' agreement and available resources, a voluntary coordination group with representatives selected through our own processes. The group will facilitate periodic exchanges, share updates on actions taken and support a collective review of progress. Its mandate and working arrangements will be agreed by the participating Peoples and Communities, without replacing their own authorities.

c. Our call to action

16. We call upon States to uphold the rights of IPLCs and Afro-descendant Peoples, including the right of self-determination and territorial rights, and to recognise and protect our ancestral knowledge and practices. This includes ensuring free, prior, informed and culturally appropriate consultation and effective participation in public policy. We call upon States and civil society organisations to recognise us as rights-holders and equal decision-makers in integrated fire management, to respect our authorities and governance systems, and to mainstream fire management across public policies.

17. We call upon States to shift from models based exclusively on fire suppression to integrated fire management approaches that incorporate cultural fire management, prevention, biocultural restoration, good living and dialogue

among knowledge systems, recognising our authorities, our own governance systems and community planning and territorial management instruments, and ending the criminalisation of ancestral fire management practices.

18. Indigenous and community fire brigades must be recognised as essential and complementary actors in fire prevention and response, while States retain their responsibility to ensure effective public fire prevention and response systems. In this regard, we urge States to strengthen the capacities and formal recognition of these brigades through appropriate legal frameworks, institutional recognition of their roles, fair and adequate remuneration, social protection, decent working conditions and occupational safety and health protections; and to provide direct and permanent state funding, training, equipment, access to tools for data generation and interpretation, early warning systems and monitoring mechanisms. We further urge States to establish effective coordination protocols between brigades and municipal, regional and national authorities, with response mechanisms operating at multiple levels, adapted to the governance structures, responsibilities and capacities of the actors involved in each territory.

19. We call upon States and international organisations to recognise territorial fire governance as an essential strategy for biodiversity conservation and climate resilience. They must establish effective arrangements for IPLCs and Afro-descendant Peoples to participate with decision-making power, including a voice and a vote, in relevant climate, environmental and fire policy forums. Our participation in multilateral negotiations and international policy processes must extend beyond side events to include formal consultation and engagement opportunities.

20. We call upon States to provide adequate and sustained public funding for territorial fire governance, recognising our contributions to climate and biodiversity goals. We call upon financial institutions, cooperation agencies and donors to establish direct, accessible and culturally appropriate financing for initiatives led by IPLCs and Afro-descendant Peoples. Funding arrangements must support locally defined priorities, equitable allocation, capacity-building, transparency and accountability, with application and reporting requirements proportionate to community capacities.

21. We call upon States, international organisations, cooperation agencies and donors to strengthen cooperation across territories, regions and countries, support knowledge-sharing and exchanges led by IPLCs and Afro-descendant Peoples and provide resources for the voluntary follow-up process established through this Declaration.

22. We urge scientific and academic institutions to support community-led research and jointly develop knowledge and fire management tools with IPLCs and Afro-descendant Peoples. Research partnerships must involve us in identifying needs and setting priorities, designing methods, generating and interpreting findings, and deciding how results are applied. They must respect our protocols and, where applicable, free, prior and informed consent; protect our collective intellectual property and sensitive data; and ensure fair and equitable benefit-sharing. Scientific and technical findings must be returned to our Peoples and Communities in accessible formats and relevant languages.

23. Through this Declaration, we call upon society as a whole to assume shared responsibility for caring for the environment and upholding good living; to respect and support the territorial leadership of IPLCs and Afro-descendant Peoples in integrated fire management, without shifting onto us responsibilities that lie with other actors; to hold private actors accountable for the impacts of their actions; and to strengthen our collective commitment to life, Mother Earth and integrated fire management, ensuring resilient territories for future generations.

This Declaration was collectively developed through the leadership, knowledge and contributions of Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities and Afro-descendant Peoples, represented by the following organisations and territories:

- Asociación de Comunidades Forestales de Petén - ACOFOP
- Asociación de Forestería Comunitaria de Guatemala - Utz Che
- Asociación Mesoamericana de Pueblos y Bosques - AMPB
- Asociación Nacional de los Ejecutores de Contratos de Administración de las Reservas Comunales del Perú - ANECAP
- Comunidad Yunguilla, Ecuador
- Comunidade Shawãdawa, Brasil
- Confederación Comarca Afroecuatoriana del Norte de Esmeraldas - CANE
- Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana - CONFENIAE
- Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica – COICA
- FSC Indigenous Foundation
- Fundación para la Promoción del Conocimiento Indígena - FPCI
- Hotspot Intervention Area, Ghana - HIA
- Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation - IMPACT
- Keystone Foundation
- Red Indígena Bribri y Cabécar - RIBCA
- Red Mexicana de Organizaciones Campesinas Forestales - RedMOCAF
- Unión de Comunidades Productoras Forestales Zapotecos-Chinantecos de la Sierra Juárez - UZACHI
- Wildfire Action Accelerator