

For more information, please contact:
Jenna DiPaolo Colley, +1 202-412-0331 / jdipaolo@rightsandresources.org

*** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ***

As New Law Gutting the Land Rights of Peru's Indigenous Peoples Passes, International Forum of Indigenous Women Presents Way Forward for Progress

More than 60 Indigenous Women from Across the World Come Together to Address their Critical Role in Combating Climate Change

Lima, Peru (16 July 2014)—At an international forum on community land and resource rights in Lima today, women from across the world called for inclusion of indigenous women's perspectives and participation in the dialogue around national and international climate change adaptation and mitigation policies.

These recommendations to ensure women's rights and contributions are recognized were made by more than 60 indigenous women from 15 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America and center on three issues: a) the effective participation of indigenous women and communities in decision-making on climate change policy at the national and international level; b) the collective rights of women to land and forests; and c) the integration of indigenous women's vision and management of natural resources in public policy.

"For too long, women in Peru and around the world have been excluded from decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods. Historically, governance of land and resources is one of these decisions, with perhaps the most far-reaching and devastating impact," said Omaira Bolaños, Latin America Regional Program Director of the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI). "Respecting and incorporating the collective land and resource rights of women is critical to the success of national climate change adaptation strategies, as well as international economic development initiatives. These recommendations provide a way forward for discussions at all levels: within communities, in national legal frameworks, and global dialogues on climate strategies."

Government officials from the Peruvian Ministries of Women, Environment and Foreign Affairs attended the public portion of the *International Indigenous Women's Forum* on July 16, 2014 and each committed to work closely with civil society and indigenous organizations in the lead up to the Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Lima in December to ensure that the recommendations made by participants are considered.

"There should be no difference between the access of men and women to their natural resources, and this is particularly important when it comes to land and entitlement," said Ernesto Reaz, advisor to Manuel Pulgar Vidal, the Peruvian Minister of the Environment and coordinator of civil society engagement at the COP. "We need to ensure our proposals to the COP are grounded in the reality of men and women in the communities."

Despite the tremendous role women play in the management of its resources and the knowledge they hold to protect and nurture the environment, women often remain the most marginalized and

vulnerable group within indigenous communities. For example, forum participants pointed to the risks—like the inability to feed their families or loss of livelihoods—that arise when women’s perspectives and knowledge of the lands and forests are not incorporated in the discussions around their uses and management.

“Indigenous women play an undeniable role in conservation and adaptation to climate change because their lives are intertwined with the lands and forests they depend upon,” said Gladis Vila Pihue, President of La Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP). “Yet despite the positive comments of the ministry today, my government recently opted to circumvent indigenous rights at exactly the moment they should have been a leader as the host of this year’s COP. Peru should continue championing the effective strategies that indigenous peoples have been using for centuries as a tool for conservation.”

“But we are not dismayed,” continued Vila Pihue. “This forum is a good opportunity to articulate our needs and recommendations to the Peruvian government. It is a starting point for ongoing collaboration between all of us—Indigenous, Amazonian and Andean women—and the Peruvian government, and it is our hope that, as a result of this conversation, our perspectives will be embraced as a necessary piece of a Peruvian climate change strategy.”

And this injustice isn’t limited to Peru; it is echoed across the world. In Kenya, where land is often owned collectively by extended families and clans, men generally control the land. Even though women do most of the farming, barely five percent of women have land registered in their name.

In [Nepal](#), land may be transferred from fathers to sons, but not to daughters—unless they remain unmarried after the age of 34. Even though women in Nepal, like in Kenya, do most of the farming, they only own about 10 percent of the landholdings.

“Women produce nearly half of the food grown in the developing world and are often first in line to bear the added burden of adapting to climate change, yet very few have recognized rights to show for their contribution,” said **Cecile Bibiane Ndjebet**, President, African Women's Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF) and one of the participants at the International Forum. “Women of the world must unite in the fight for recognition of our rights. Without our wisdom and participation, any measure to protect the world from the havoc threatened by climate change will be derailed. This fight belongs to all of us.”

Participants of the forum developed [twelve recommendations](#) for the Peruvian Government to promote at COP 20, including those below:

- Ensure compliance and enforcement of international norms and laws that protect the collective rights of indigenous peoples and women, our right to self-determination and free, prior, and informed consent.
- Prioritize tenure and collective titling of lands and territories to ensure participation of women.
- Review and update legal frameworks to ensure the active, effective and equal participation of indigenous women at all stages and levels of decision-making, administration and representation.
- Create participatory mechanisms to develop, enhance and strengthen the capacity of indigenous women and our organizations, and ensure equal participation in the various decision-making forums.

- Respect and recognize the vision and worldview of our peoples, self-determination of our territories, which have been built over thousands of years, through opportunities for participation in public policy on natural resources and forests.
- Request that States prioritize community-based adaptation in the territories of indigenous peoples and communities with the active participation of women in order to ensure the conservation and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Ensure the participation of indigenous peoples and communities, with gender equity in the design and implementation of the legal and financial mechanisms for climate change policies.

The *International Indigenous Women's Forum: Land and Climate Change: Challenges and Opportunities towards COP20*, was co-organized by the National Organization of Andean and Amazonian Women of Peru (ONAMIAP), the Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (AIDESEP), and the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI). The forum was attended by more than 60 indigenous women from 15 countries across Latin America, Asia and Africa, as well as issue experts, civil society and non-governmental organizations, and representatives of the Peruvian government.

###

Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI)

The Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) is a global coalition of 14 Partners and over 140 international, regional and community organizations advancing forest tenure, policy and market reforms. RRI leverages the strategic collaboration and investment of its Partners and Collaborators around the world by working together on research, advocacy, and convening strategic actors to catalyze change on the ground. RRI is coordinated by the Rights and Resources Group, a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC. For more information, please visit www.rightsandresources.org.