



## ASIA INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PACT FOUNDATION

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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, and Relatives of One Ocean People,

We, the Indigenous Peoples, represented by several organizations including Association of Artisanal Fishers, respectfully call upon the United Nations, Member States, and relevant stakeholders to urgently recognize, respect, and protect our Indigenous Ocean rights. The ocean is everything for us, our source of life, livelihoods, languages, traditions, cultures and spiritual connections. We protect marine biodiversity, practising small scale sustainable fishing, and customarily manage marine spaces based on our Indigenous knowledge systems. Yet, under the current blue economy and other frameworks, our ancestral ocean territories are increasingly being subjected to ocean grabbing and further marginalizing. Decisions are made – by Governments, corporations, and multilateral bodies – without our meaningful participation and informed consent. Plans are developed, agreements are signed, and projects are initiated without meaningfully engaging us, the knowledge holders with lived experience and long-standing relationships with the ocean.

We ask: how can we continue this, while our first-hand knowledge, rights and contributions remain unrecognized? We are not just small-scale fishers. We are Indigenous Peoples with rich histories, diverse cultures, ancestral languages and holistic and unique knowledge systems deeply embedded in oceanic ecosystems.

We offer the following recommendations for urgent action:

1. Formally recognize, legalize, and protect Indigenous Ocean rights, not only within the territorial waters, but also in trans-boundary marine areas and on the high seas.
2. Ensure the recognition and protection of Indigenous rights in all international, national and local treaties, agreements and legal instruments, whether between states, or between states and private actors.
3. Establish direct and equitable funding mechanisms to support Indigenous-led conservation efforts and creation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)
4. Promote and invest in community-driven marine research and community-led development initiatives within blue spaces.
5. Support the documentation, preservation and revitalization of Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous languages and ensure they inform ocean science and policy
6. Recognise Indigenous Peoples as right-holders and equal partners, not merely stakeholders, and uphold our right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)



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including right to withdraw consent to the projects and right to say NO to the projects, in all oceans related decisions and actions.

We urge the United Nations and its Member States to work with us in partnership, acknowledging our rights, respecting our knowledge, and ensuring our full and effective participation in the stewardship of the ocean.

**Thank you**

**Submitted By**

**Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact,**

Mr. Prem Singh Tharu, Environment Programme Officer

**Indigenous Coastal Youth Network,**

Mr. Leno Ignatious, Member

**Asia Indigenous Youths Platform and Association of Artisanal Fishers,**

Mr. Johnson Jament - PhD, Member