

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF TE IKAROA – DEFENDING OUR WATERS  
DELIVERED BY SEVENTH GENERATION FUND FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

9 June 2017 – UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE – NEW YORK

Kia Ora ra.

We thank you for the opportunity to make this statement, we would firstly like to acknowledge the rightful keepers of the lands and waters upon which we have gathered – Haudenosaunee, Tena Koutou, and warm greetings to all gathered here today as friends of the Ocean.

We wish to direct this forum to the issue of indigenous rights, and remind the forum that on numerous occasions, the UN has heard how sustainable development issues impact primarily upon Indigenous Peoples, and importantly, that we also hold vital science and wisdom regarding ocean and climate resilience.

This is mirrored by the broad number of UN doctrine such as:

- The 2014 UN thematic paper on the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples which concluded that: Indigenous knowledge has emerged as an essential resource to inform environmental decision-making in global intergovernmental processes.
- The Paris Agreement on Climate Change which recognises that action should be based on and guided by the best available science and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples.
- The September 2014 General Assembly commitment to respecting the contributions of Indigenous Peoples to ecosystem management and sustainable development.
- Numerous 2016 IUCN resolutions that value indigenous approaches.

A framework for incorporating indigenous contribution already exists within the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Convention's working group on indigenous rights has contributed significantly to global efforts in relation to Biological Diversity.

These references all honour the many rights affirmed within the Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – and in particular Article 26 in relation to our territories, and importantly – our rights to be recognised for our customs, traditions and land tenure systems.

In this light, we view UNCLOS as an imposed tenure system which violates our oceanic territorial rights. Our peoples have lived with, on and by the ocean for countless generations – we have made families on the ocean, fed from him, cared for him, voyaged upon him, sung and prayed to him – we

have the longest record of demonstrated sustainable practice of any group in the world, and this is why the Ocean Conference cannot afford to overlook our role in these solutions.

For these reasons, we formally request that the rapporteur for indigenous rights and/or a working group of Indigenous Peoples be appointed to determine the most appropriate mechanism for oversight and guidance in the implementation of the Convention and efforts towards SDG14. This will ensure that implementation occurs in line with current international standards on indigenous rights

In conclusion I must say that while we do endorse the current call to action we do not feel that it goes far enough in securing indigenous rights in relation to SDG14. We are more than relevant stakeholders - we are Ocean Peoples and our territories have always extended beyond national jurisdiction boundaries and we deserve an entrenched voice in these meetings. For instance we have been tasked with carrying a voice of hundreds of thousands of indigenous New Zealanders and 24000 New Zealanders in objection to the actions of Statoil and if we are to be relegated to vying for 3 minute submissions and side events then that fails the Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – so I sincerely hope that, in future Ocean Conferences, there will be an entrenched space for Indigenous Peoples to have our collective voice heard.

Thankyou Chair.