

**Statement to Prof Jacek Purchla, Chair of the 41st Session of the UNESCO
World Heritage Committee meeting, Kraków, Poland
3 July 2017**

Considering that:

- indigenous peoples have a special standing under the UN, with the establishment of mechanisms specifically meant to address the recognition, protection, and promotion of their human rights;
- the UN General Assembly in 2007 adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- other UN Conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention to Combat Desertification, and Framework Convention on Climate Change, have welcomed the establishment of indigenous peoples' forums;
- IUCN's 2016 World Conservation Congress adopted a policy recognizing a distinct membership category for Indigenous Peoples Organizations.

Noting the role of indigenous peoples' in other UNESCO instruments:

- the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage;
- the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, wherein Article 11 asks Parties to 'acknowledge the fundamental role of civil society in protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions' and the Parties shall encourage the active participation of civil society.

Noting further that:

- participants at the 4th International NGO Forum on UNESCO World Heritage at Risk, held in Kraków, Poland 30 June and 1 July 2017, welcome the decision on the indigenous peoples present in Kraków to establish an **International Indigenous Peoples Forum on World Heritage**.

Recognising that:

- the establishment of the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on World Heritage is a major contribution to the realization of the fundamental aims of the 1972 World Heritage Convention.
- our indigenous peoples bring invaluable contributions to the Convention, including our indigenous and traditional knowledge, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, conservation of nature, and cultural practices and innovations.
- for millennia, our indigenous peoples have been stewards and custodians of many of these landscapes, seascapes, and sites. We welcome the opportunity to engage further in the successful implementation of the Convention and the long-term conservation of the world's outstanding cultural and natural heritage.

The International Indigenous Peoples Forum on World Heritage invites the Chair of the 41st session of the World Heritage Committee to acknowledge this historic achievement, part of the legacy of the Kraków session.