

# FIRST REGIONAL INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES REPRESENTATIVES MEETING ON **SUBSISTENCE HUNTING AND WILDMEAT** IN THE GUIANA SHIELD AND AMAZON REGIONS

## **Community Voices Document**

We, the communities from Peru, Brazil, Guyana, Colombia, French Guiana and Suriname<sup>1</sup> have met from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2019 in Aishalton Village, South Rupununi, Guyana.

We have shared, discussed and reached an agreement on a set of aspects related to wildmeat and subsistence hunting from the perspective of Indigenous and local communities.

We acknowledge that, despite the specificities of our diverse cultures and social and environmental contexts in which we live, we share a common goal.

We all strongly believe that our land and resources are our richness, our heritage, and constitutes the basis of our culture and lives.

### **About the importance of wildmeat and subsistence hunting for our communities**

Our forefathers and parents have lived with wildlife for generations.

We have inherited from them an immense set of skills and ancestral knowledge on gathering, farming, hunting and fishing, which continue to form the basis of our livelihoods.

As all human beings, we are going through social changes that have affected our values, attitudes, beliefs, practices, and ways of life. Despite this, our aim and wish is for us to continue hunting in a sustainable way for food in our territories.

Subsistence hunting is indeed essential for our local livelihoods: it contributes to the need to feed our families, to share during community working sessions, for traditional/religious cultural and social events and ceremonies, for medicinal purposes and as a source of some income. Sharing of wildmeat strengthens our social relations.

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<sup>1</sup>Peru - Tamshiyacu, Yarina, Pebas, Iquitos

Brazil – Amazon: Manissua, Canada, Santa Isabel, Metareila, São Paulo de Oliveira

French Guiana - Elhia

Guyana - Surama, Annai, Karasabai, Yupukari, Aishalton, Awarewanawa, Shulinab, Maruranawa, Sawariwao, Katoonerib

Colombia - Puerto Nariño

Suriname - Apoera

We stress the fact that our definition of subsistence hunting includes the possibility to sell the surplus of wildmeat to satisfy our basic family needs.

### **About the challenges we face**

We observe that, over the last 20 years, in many locations, wildlife has become more difficult to find and when we go hunting, we usually need to invest more effort to find game.

We acknowledge that we have also placed increased pressure on our wildlife, because of numerous reasons including population growth, sedentarization, changes in hunting tools, limited recognition of the true extend of our traditional territories, and the need to feed our families.

We also recognize the adverse and irreversible impacts of unregulated large-scale logging activities, illegal mining, illegal wildlife trade for the international market, large scale agro-industry, on our wildlife. These external factors perpetuate habitat loss, pollution of our rivers (e.g. mercury poisoning) and increased wild fires in our territories. The harm caused by these activities is also exacerbated by climate change.

We are concerned about the health of our communities, which is being affected by changes in our food and increased access to industrial food. We are facing serious challenges due to the loss of our cultural identity. Our youths are losing interest, knowledge and skills in hunting and other related traditional activities.

### **About our management efforts**

We acknowledge that if no actions are taken, it will be difficult to maintain a healthy wildlife population in the future and this is why we have already started to take action to manage our land and our natural resources.

Our experiences have led us to organize ourselves to defend our land, maintain and revitalize our culture, and work towards sustainable management agreements.

Our wildlife management rules include agreements on the following:

- Hunting seasons and calendars based on traditional knowledge
- List of animals that we can't hunt as well as list of commercial species (where relevant)
- Quotas for species
- Demarcation of hunting zones and no-hunting areas
- Guidelines and rules for shifting cultivation
- Restoration of wildlife habitats with fruiting trees

We monitor our wildlife and hunting activities because this provides us with key information to support our management decisions. We combine traditional knowledge with new technologies for data collection.

We educate our young people about our cultures and traditions, about the importance of wildlife for our communities' livelihoods and about the need to manage in an effort to ensure that our young people don't lose interest in our heritage.

We defend our land by monitoring and reporting authorized and un-authorized activities.

We are starting to bring sustainably managed products to the market by transforming and packaging the wildmeat. We are learning from our experiences on how commercial trade can provide income to our communities while preserving the resource for future generations.

We are also adapting our activities to the realities of our environment by producing other sources of income and investing in other productive systems (fruits, poultry, handicraft) and in eco-tourism.

Our experiences show that successful management is based on the following **4 fundamental principles**:

- 1. Land security:** We are convinced that land security increases our capacities to manage our resources sustainably and defend our culture. We can't protect our resources if we are not the owners and the guardians of our land. Territorial autonomy to decide and control our land is necessary.
- 2. Unity and self-organization:** being organized has helped us empower our community, provide more visibility to our goals and activities at different levels and has allowed to communicate and partner better with other stakeholders
- 3. Legal recognition:** We cannot protect our land alone and we need the recognition from the central governments, we need their support to fight illegal activities and to promote sustainable use. It is our right to be consulted about, participate in and contribute to decisions affecting our collective lives and territories. The current disconnection of visions between the decision-making bodies in centralized governments and our local vision leads to misunderstanding and conflict. Our activities need to be legally recognized through a clear regulation which is articulated with the needs of local communities. Based on the 169 Convention, our governments have the responsibility to include our communities in decisions that affect our resources.
- 4. Co-management and network:** Partnerships with the national government, NGOs, and the academic world with a leadership from the local communities are key to success. Inter community sharing to exchange knowledge and experiences has also proved to be very fruitful.

We acknowledge that sustainable hunting can be better achieved if our youth and leaders are trained and have the capacities to manage sustainably, and if systems for data collection and analysis are put in place in our communities, particularly on the following topics: wildlife populations, hunting levels (quantities, species, sites, seasons etc...), key habitats for wildlife (breeding grounds, spawning areas, feeding areas etc...), local/traditional hunting and management practices, wildmeat exchange and trade flows from the community to markets, habitat changes (deforestation, mining areas, logging areas etc...)

### **Recommendations:**

1. We urge our Governments to recognize and respect security of land rights for indigenous and traditional people. We therefore stand united to claim the demarcation of our territories where it has never been done, or to extend our land titles.
2. We recommend that our Governments amend existing legislation and policies so as to support and recognize customary laws and traditional knowledge on hunting, use of natural resources and importance of traditional territories for wildlife conservation.
3. We recommend our Governments to uphold their responsibility of being inclusive in the development of policies which involves Indigenous Peoples and be respectful of the principles of FPIC, particularly when large scale productive projects are authorized in or around our territories.
4. We recommend our Governments to formally recognize indigenous peoples' self-designated governance institutions to ensure effective protection of customary use of biological resource.
5. We recommend that measures be taken to ensure that the management of protected areas
  - a) respect indigenous peoples' customary land tenure and resource management systems.
  - (b) be consistent with indigenous peoples' rights in domestic and international law.
6. We recommend our Governments and the International community increase their support to locally driven sustainable hunting initiatives, particularly through technical support and financial resources for monitoring and management.