



From Forest Guardians to Climate and Biodiversity Partners:

Advancing Indigenous-Led Sustainable Forest Management

A Policy Brief
Prepared by the FSC Indigenous Foundation



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INTRODUCTION

As the world approaches the 30th Conference of the Parties (COP 30) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Belém, Brazil, taking transformative and inclusive climate action is becoming more urgent. This moment represents not only a critical juncture for global negotiations on climate change mitigation, adaptation, and finance but also a crucial opportunity to reaffirm the leadership role of Indigenous Peoples in determining pathways toward sustainable and just climate solutions.

COP 30 will take place in Belem, Brazil, the gateway to the Amazon, a region that symbolizes both the resilience of Indigenous-led forest management and the immense pressures facing forest ecosystems and the Indigenous Peoples who rely on them due to climate change and unsustainable economic activities.

Forests remain central to the global climate agenda. They absorb carbon dioxide, regulate weather patterns, and host the majority of the planet's biodiversity. Yet, beyond their ecological function, forests are homelands, cultural anchors, and sources of spiritual connection for Indigenous Peoples. Across generations, communities of Indigenous Peoples have developed and sustained systems of forest governance based on reciprocity, respect, and responsibility. These systems reflect a worldview that places humans as part of the forest, not separate from it, and where conservation and livelihoods are inseparable. Such Indigenous-led approaches to forest stewardship have proven to be among the most effective and sustainable models of forest management globally.

However, in many international policy spaces, including those of the UNFCCC, Indigenous Peoples remain underrepresented or are often treated as stakeholders rather than rightsholders, partners, and co-creators of solutions. This dynamic needs to change if the world is to achieve genuine sustainability and equity. **The FSC Indigenous Foundation advocates for a shift in mindset, one that recognizes Indigenous Peoples as central actors in climate and forest governance** rather than as beneficiaries of external aid. Achieving this transformation requires structural changes across global and national levels, including how forest management is defined and carried out, how traditional knowledge is valued, and how financial mechanisms are designed and implemented.



This policy brief situates Indigenous-led sustainable forest management within the broader framework of global climate negotiations. It aims to support Indigenous organizations, partners, and allies in navigating the complex processes of COP 30, especially for those who are new to international advocacy spaces. The brief outlines key policy themes that will shape discussions in Belém: sustainable forest management, traditional knowledge, direct access to finance, and carbon and non-market approaches. Each theme is linked to relevant UNFCCC agenda items and ongoing debates to help Indigenous actors understand where their advocacy can have the most impact.

By bridging technical discussions with Indigenous worldviews and priorities, this brief encourages meaningful engagement of and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples. It emphasizes that the future of forests and the health of the planet depend on recognizing and empowering Indigenous governance systems. Through partnerships built on respect, equality, and trust, the global community can move toward climate responses that uphold justice, restore ecosystems, and sustain both people and the planet. COP 30 offers an opportunity to make this vision a reality if Indigenous-led forest management and traditional knowledge are placed at the center of global action.



SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT AND INDIGENOUS STEWARDSHIP SYSTEMS



Sustainable forest management is vital for climate stability, biodiversity, and sustainable development, yet global discussions often overlook that Indigenous Peoples have taken care of the land for centuries. Their governance systems and knowledge are rooted in a holistic understanding that the health of forests is tied to the well-being of people. Guided by generations of learning, these stewardship systems maintain ecological balance and biodiversity through customary laws that regulate resource use and protection. Sacred forests are conserved, while community-managed areas balance use with preservation. In an era of biodiversity loss and climate change, Indigenous knowledge remains indispensable, as forests thrive where Indigenous Peoples have secure rights and authority over their lands.

Under the UNFCCC, discussions related to forests are primarily housed under the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) agenda on forests, land use, and REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation). These negotiations influence how countries account for emissions from land use and how they design programs that aim to reduce deforestation while promoting sustainable management. For COP 30 in Belém, these agenda items are especially significant given Brazil's leadership in forest conservation and the Amazon's crucial role in sustaining global climate balance and biodiversity.



Current debates in the UNFCCC center on ensuring transparency, environmental integrity, and equitable participation in mechanisms such as REDD+. Many states focus on carbon outcomes, seeking measurable emission reductions to meet national commitments under the Paris Agreement. On the other hand, Indigenous Peoples emphasize that forests are more than carbon stocks. They call for recognition of non-carbon benefits such as biodiversity conservation, water regulation, food security, and the preservation of cultural heritage. These benefits are not secondary but essential to the integrity and sustainability of forest ecosystems. Indigenous Peoples also advocate for safeguards that ensure nation state forest programs respect rights, secure land tenure, and uphold the principles of free, prior, and informed consent.

The FSC Indigenous Foundation calls for sustainable forest management that must be Indigenous-led.

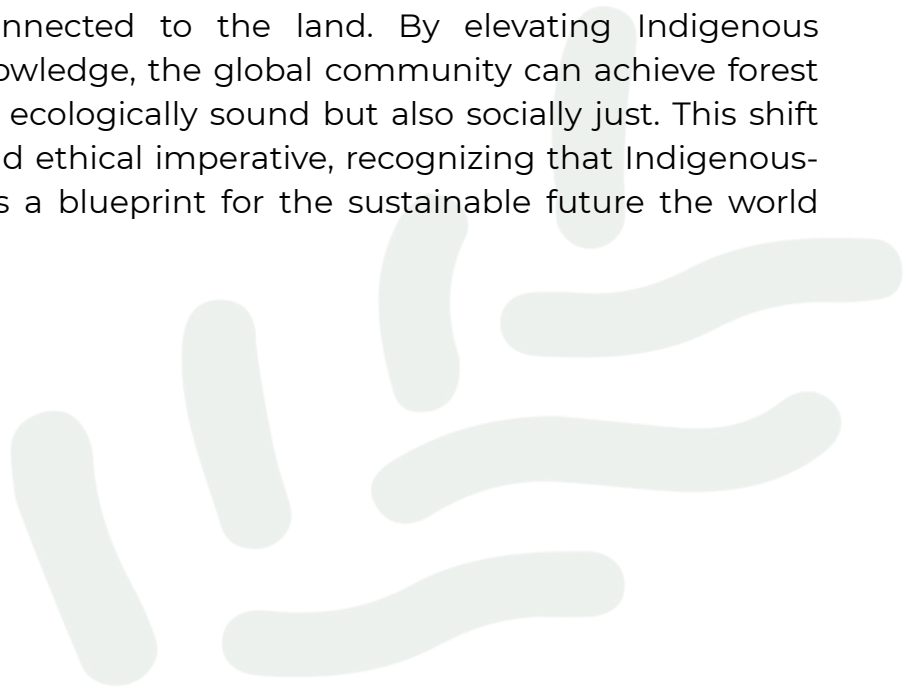
Indigenous forest governance systems should not be treated as complementary but as central to achieving national and global forest goals. Beyond conservation, the FSC Indigenous Foundation upholds the principle of equitable benefit-sharing to ensure that Indigenous Peoples and local communities derive fair and lasting benefits from the forests they protect. This approach guarantees that the well-being of current generations is secured while safeguarding the rights and resources of future ones.





To realize this vision, governments and international institutions must strengthen partnerships with Indigenous organizations and ensure that Indigenous governance systems are recognized within policy and legal frameworks. Sustainable forest management must move beyond certification models to embrace customary governance, collective rights, and cultural practices. Certification can be a valuable tool, but true sustainability depends on supporting the communities who have long served as the caretakers of the world's forests, enabling them to continue stewarding the forests.

The path forward requires aligning modern forest management approaches with Indigenous values and worldviews, ensuring that decision-making authority rests with those most deeply connected to the land. By elevating Indigenous leadership and systems of knowledge, the global community can achieve forest management that is not only ecologically sound but also socially just. This shift represents both a practical and ethical imperative, recognizing that Indigenous-led forest management offers a blueprint for the sustainable future the world urgently needs.



TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND CLIMATE POLICY



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Traditional knowledge is a living system developed by Indigenous Peoples through centuries of interaction with their lands and ecosystems. It combines ecological, cultural, spiritual, and social dimensions, reflecting a worldview that sees all life as interconnected. In the face of the climate crisis, it offers vital insights on adaptation, resilience, and ecosystem restoration. Indigenous Peoples have long sustained biodiversity, protected watersheds, and managed forests through practices like rotational farming and community-based management. These proven methods address deforestation and biodiversity loss, yet

traditional knowledge remains undervalued and often excluded from formal climate policies.

At the international level, the recognition of traditional knowledge has become a key theme within the UNFCCC. This discussion primarily falls under the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) agenda item and the Nairobi Work Programme on adaptation. The LCIPP was established in 2015 at COP 21 in Paris and further strengthened through subsequent decisions of the Conferences of the Parties. Its purpose is to facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices, strengthen the integration of traditional knowledge into climate policies, and enhance the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in climate decision-making.

The LCIPP operates under three core functions: knowledge exchange, capacity building, and policy coherence. The knowledge exchange function enables Indigenous knowledge holders and scientists to share practices that support adaptation and mitigation. The capacity-building function focuses on enhancing the ability of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to engage effectively in climate governance processes. The policy coherence function seeks to ensure that climate actions at all levels are aligned with human rights standards and respect Indigenous Peoples' worldviews and governance systems.



A significant milestone for the LCIPP was the adoption of the Baku Workplan (2024–2026) at COP 29. The Baku Workplan provides a roadmap for implementing the functions of the LCIPP through concrete activities and collaborations. It is grounded in the principle of thinking of the next seven generations, a value that reflects Indigenous Peoples' long-term vision of sustainability and responsibility. This principle emphasizes that every decision taken today should ensure the wellbeing of those who will inherit the Earth in the future. By applying this generational perspective, the LCIPP reinforces the idea that traditional knowledge is inherently forward-looking and deeply aligned with the objectives of climate resilience and sustainable development.

Current debates in the LCIPP, and in broader COP spaces, focus on how to operationalize the three core functions in a way that moves beyond symbolic recognition. While there is widespread agreement among Parties on the value of traditional knowledge, actual implementation remains slow. Many Indigenous representatives call for stronger institutional mechanisms that ensure equal participation in policy formulation and implementation. There is also an ongoing discussion about how to establish fair and transparent procedures for sharing traditional knowledge while protecting the intellectual and cultural rights of Indigenous communities.

Another important area of debate concerns the interface between traditional knowledge and science. Some Parties advocate for a more structured process of integrating Indigenous knowledge into national adaptation and mitigation strategies, while others emphasize that traditional knowledge should be treated as a distinct system rather than assimilated into scientific frameworks. For Indigenous Peoples, the priority is to ensure that traditional knowledge is respected on its own terms and applied through Indigenous governance systems rather than external institutions.

From the perspective of the FSC Indigenous Foundation, **traditional knowledge must be central to climate policy and forest governance.** Recognition should go beyond consultation and involve codecision-making and co-production of knowledge. Indigenous knowledge systems and scientific approaches



should be treated as complementary and equal in value. Embedding traditional knowledge into forest governance frameworks ensures that decisions are grounded in both cultural and ecological wisdom.

Capacity-building programs under the LCIPP provide an important avenue for strengthening Indigenous participation in global and national decision-making processes. Through these programs, Indigenous Peoples can further develop tools and platforms for knowledge sharing, monitoring, and policy advocacy. The FSC Indigenous Foundation supports initiatives that bridge traditional and scientific knowledge, promote intergenerational learning, and strengthen Indigenous leadership in climate governance.

At COP 30, discussions on traditional knowledge under the LCIPP and related adaptation agenda items will offer an opportunity to reaffirm the central role of Indigenous Peoples in achieving global climate goals. By ensuring that Indigenous knowledge holders are active participants and co-authors of climate solutions, the international community can build a more inclusive and effective response to the climate crisis. Traditional knowledge is not only part of Indigenous identity but also a vital global resource for sustainability and resilience. Recognizing and empowering it is both a matter of justice and a path toward a more balanced and sustainable future for all.



**DIRECT FINANCE FOR
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
AND LOCAL
COMMUNITIES**



Access to climate finance remains one of the most critical challenges for Indigenous Peoples and local communities around the world. Although these communities are among the most affected by the impacts of climate change, they receive only a very small share of global climate funding. Yet, Indigenous organizations have consistently demonstrated their capacity to implement effective and innovative climate solutions that combine environmental protection with social well-being. Direct finance is not only a matter of efficiency but also of justice. It ensures that resources reach those who are already leading climate actions on the ground through their own governance systems and knowledge.

Direct access to finance allows Indigenous organizations to design and implement programs that reflect their priorities, cultures, and ways of life. It also strengthens accountability by ensuring that financial resources are managed close to where impacts occur. Indigenous-led finance mechanisms have shown that funds can be used efficiently to support forest conservation, ecosystem restoration, livelihood development, and adaptation strategies when Indigenous Peoples have control over their use. Recent developments have shown an increase in the number of Indigenous-led financial systems emerging at national and regional levels. These mechanisms must be encouraged and supported, as they represent important pathways for ensuring that resources are effectively managed in alignment with Indigenous governance structures and values.

However, under the current global financial architecture, Indigenous Peoples often rely on intermediaries such as national governments or large international non-governmental organizations to access funding. This indirect model can result in delays, high transaction costs, and the exclusion of Indigenous priorities. Within the UNFCCC, the issue of direct finance will be discussed under several agenda items during COP 30. The most relevant ones are the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) that provides guidance on climate finance architecture and transparency and the new Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) that aims to support countries and communities facing the irreversible impacts of climate change. Discussions will also take place under the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Adaptation Fund, both of which are mandated to support developing countries in implementing climate actions. These funds are exploring modalities for enhanced access, including community-based approaches and simplified approval processes.

Despite the increasing recognition among Parties and climate finance institutions that direct access is vital, several structural barriers persist. Indigenous organizations often lack formal recognition within national systems, making it difficult for them to be accredited or to receive funds directly. The complex procedures for accreditation, reporting, and fiduciary management are often designed for large institutions, not for community-based organizations. In addition, many countries centralize climate finance distribution through government agencies, limiting the ability of Indigenous Peoples to receive funds independently. Another barrier lies in political will. While several COP decisions acknowledge the need to increase access for local actors, implementation of these commitments has been slow and uneven.



At COP 30, these challenges are likely to resurface in discussions on accountability, transparency, and inclusiveness within the global climate finance framework. While progress in negotiations may be constrained by political and procedural constraints, parallel advocacy efforts in Belém and beyond can foster greater recognition of Indigenous Peoples' organizations as legitimate financial actors. Indigenous networks and partners are expected to highlight practical pathways for reform, such as the establishment of Indigenous-led climate funds, flexible financing mechanisms, and capacity-building support to strengthen financial management systems at the community level.

From the perspective of the FSC Indigenous Foundation, **climate finance mechanisms must ensure direct, flexible, and predictable funding for Indigenous-led initiatives.** Indigenous organizations should be viewed as partners, not beneficiaries, with equal roles in decision-making and resource management. Direct finance should align with Indigenous governance structures, ensuring that funds support locally- defined priorities rather than externally-imposed projects. By investing directly in Indigenous organizations, donors and international institutions can promote accountability, strengthen ownership, and foster long-term sustainability.

Strengthening Indigenous financial mechanisms and partnerships is essential to make this vision a reality. The FSC Indigenous Foundation supports initiatives that build Indigenous financial management capacities and connect traditional governance with modern accountability systems.





These approaches demonstrate that Indigenous-led finance can deliver results that are both effective and equitable. The program of work of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) must also be adequately resourced to ensure that it achieves its objectives, particularly in strengthening Indigenous Peoples' participation and enhancing direct access to finance. Adequate resourcing of the LCIPP will help sustain initiatives that link traditional knowledge, governance, and financial empowerment at all levels.

As COP 30 convenes in Belém, the call for direct finance represents a broader demand for systemic change. It is a call to reimagine climate finance not as a top-down process but as a partnership grounded in respect, equality, and shared responsibility. Providing direct finance to Indigenous Peoples is not an act of charity but a matter of climate justice and an acknowledgment of their rights, knowledge, and enduring role in safeguarding the planet's ecosystems. Recognizing Indigenous Peoples as legitimate financial actors will not only improve the effectiveness of climate investments but will also ensure that climate action is guided by those who have been caring for forests and ecosystems for generations.

CARBON MARKETS AND NON-MARKET- APPROACHES





Carbon markets and non-market approaches are key components under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement that guide how countries cooperate to meet climate goals. Both systems aim to support mitigation and adaptation, but their success depends on how well they uphold human rights, promote equity, and ensure transparent participation. For Indigenous Peoples, these approaches intersect with land tenure, traditional governance, and cultural identity. Effective implementation therefore requires that these mechanisms respect Indigenous rights, maintain environmental integrity, and provide tangible benefits to communities that protect and sustain forests.

This theme will be discussed under **Article 6 of the Paris Agreement**, which is part of the formal COP 30 agenda. Negotiations are structured around three elements: **Article 6.2** on cooperative approaches involving the exchange of mitigation outcomes between countries, **Article 6.4** on the creation of a centralized carbon market mechanism overseen by the UNFCCC, and **Article 6.8** on non-market approaches that emphasize cooperation without relying solely on carbon trading. These discussions in Belém are expected to address transparency, integrity, and fairness in market transactions, as well as the institutional arrangements needed to scale up non-market forms of climate cooperation.

Negotiations on Article 6 continue to face technical and political challenges. Under **Article 6.2**, Parties are refining the rules on how internationally transferred mitigation outcomes (ITMOs) are calculated, tracked, and reported. Issues of double counting, corresponding adjustments, and transparency remain at the center of the debate. These technical decisions have social and territorial

implications, particularly in Indigenous territories where many carbon offset projects are developed. Without clear safeguards, the risk of the exclusion or dispossession of Indigenous Peoples remains significant.

Under **Article 6.4**, the operational framework for the global carbon market is being finalized by the Article 6.4 Supervisory Body. This mechanism is designed to generate tradable carbon credits through projects that demonstrate verified emission reductions. However, concerns have been raised regarding how these projects are implemented, especially when they overlap with Indigenous lands. Many Indigenous organizations emphasize that forest carbon initiatives must not replicate extractive models that commodify nature and ignore Indigenous governance. Instead, they call for systems that ensure Indigenous Peoples' free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) and provide fair and transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms.

Meanwhile, discussions on Article 6.8 have gained renewed attention. Non-market approaches can include community-based adaptation, capacity building, ecosystem restoration, technology exchange, and knowledge sharing. Unlike carbon markets, these approaches do not rely on the trading of credits but instead promote cooperation rooted in mutual support and equity. Many developing countries and Indigenous representatives see this as an opportunity to integrate traditional knowledge and community-based governance into global climate action. These approaches can reflect a more holistic view of forests, emphasizing biodiversity, cultural continuity, and food sovereignty alongside carbon storage.

However, the main challenge for Article 6.8 lies in establishing a clear framework for implementation and identifying sources of support. Discussions continue on how to define the scope of non-market cooperation and how to ensure coordination between governments, communities, and financial institutions. Indigenous Peoples advocate for non-market approaches to be supported with direct finance, capacity-building opportunities, and platforms for co-decision-making that respect their autonomy and knowledge systems.



The FSC Indigenous Foundation underscores that both market and non-market systems must respect Indigenous rights and ensure FPIC. Carbon initiatives should not move forward without the full participation and agreement of Indigenous communities whose lands and forests are involved. Non-market approaches should be recognized as valuable pathways that honor Indigenous forest stewardship that goes beyond carbon sequestration to include biodiversity conservation, cultural values, and community resilience. Transparent partnerships are essential to guarantee that benefits flow directly to Indigenous Peoples and that resources strengthen their governance systems and livelihoods. These partnerships should be built on mutual accountability and cultural respect, ensuring that climate actions support self-determined and locally-grounded solutions.

Article 6 presents both opportunities and risks for Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities. Carbon markets have the potential to mobilize climate finance but must operate within frameworks that guarantee Indigenous rights, transparency, and benefit-sharing. Non-market approaches offer complementary avenues that align closely with Indigenous values of balance and reciprocity, promoting sustainable and inclusive forms of climate cooperation. As COP 30 takes place in the Amazon, a region deeply tied to Indigenous stewardship, the outcomes of the Article 6 negotiations will carry significant implications. Ensuring that Indigenous-led forest management and traditional governance systems are fully recognized within both market and non-market mechanisms is critical to achieving genuine climate justice and long-term sustainability.



Toward a Change in Mindset

The call for climate justice is ultimately a call to transform the way the world perceives and engages with Indigenous Peoples. For far too long, Indigenous communities have been treated as recipients of development aid or beneficiaries of external programs rather than as equal partners and knowledge holders in their own right. Yet, Indigenous Peoples have sustained forests, waters, and ecosystems through governance systems and values that long predate modern conservation and climate frameworks. To address the climate crisis effectively, the global community must shift from a mindset of inclusion as charity to one of partnership grounded in respect, equity, and co-leadership.

A genuine change in mindset begins by acknowledging that Indigenous-led forest management is not a local or niche approach but a proven global solution. Indigenous territories hold an estimated 80 percent of the world's biodiversity and encompass many of the most intact forests. This is not a coincidence. It is the result of generations of stewardship guided by customary laws, collective decision-making, and a relational understanding of nature. When Indigenous communities are empowered to manage their forests, deforestation rates decrease, biodiversity thrives, and ecosystems recover. Yet, these successes are often overlooked in climate policy and financial mechanisms that continue to favor top-down or technocratic models.

Recognizing traditional knowledge is central to transforming climate action. Indigenous knowledge systems are dynamic, grounded in observation and adaptation, and provide practical solutions to challenges like drought, forest degradation, and biodiversity loss. Integrating these systems into climate policy is both respectful and practical, making policies more context-specific and ecologically grounded. This means moving from token consultation to genuine collaboration between Indigenous and scientific knowledge. Providing direct, flexible finance to Indigenous organizations turns this vision into action by strengthening Indigenous Peoples' ability to lead, implement, and monitor climate solutions that reflect community priorities and realities.



Changing the mindset also means redefining accountability. Indigenous Peoples are often expected to prove their capacity to manage funds or implement projects according to external standards. Yet the record of Indigenous forest management demonstrates not only effectiveness but long-term success. The burden of proof should shift toward granting institutions to show that their approaches are inclusive, rights-based, and responsive to the people who live in and depend on forests. Partnership must be built on mutual accountability, where trust, transparency, and shared goals guide collaboration.

The FSC Indigenous Foundation continues to work with Indigenous organizations, governments, and international partners to promote this transformation. **By supporting Indigenous-led forest governance, the Foundation helps to build bridges between traditional systems and global sustainability frameworks.** It aims to demonstrate that forests can be managed sustainably when Indigenous Peoples are at the center of decision-making and when their rights, knowledge, and governance systems are respected.

Ultimately, achieving climate justice requires a change not only in policy but in worldview. It demands seeing Indigenous Peoples not as stakeholders to be consulted but as partners and leaders in shaping the planet's future. This shift in mindset is not optional, it is essential for a fair, inclusive, and effective global climate response that honors both the Earth and the communities that have long cared for it.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

The following key takeaways summarize the major policy themes discussed in this brief and their relevance to COP 30 negotiations in Belém, Brazil. Each theme represents a critical area where Indigenous Peoples' leadership, traditional knowledge, and governance systems can guide more effective, equitable, and sustainable climate action. These takeaways also highlight the agenda items under the UNFCCC where the discussions will occur, the key issues being debated, and the Indigenous priorities that must shape future outcomes.

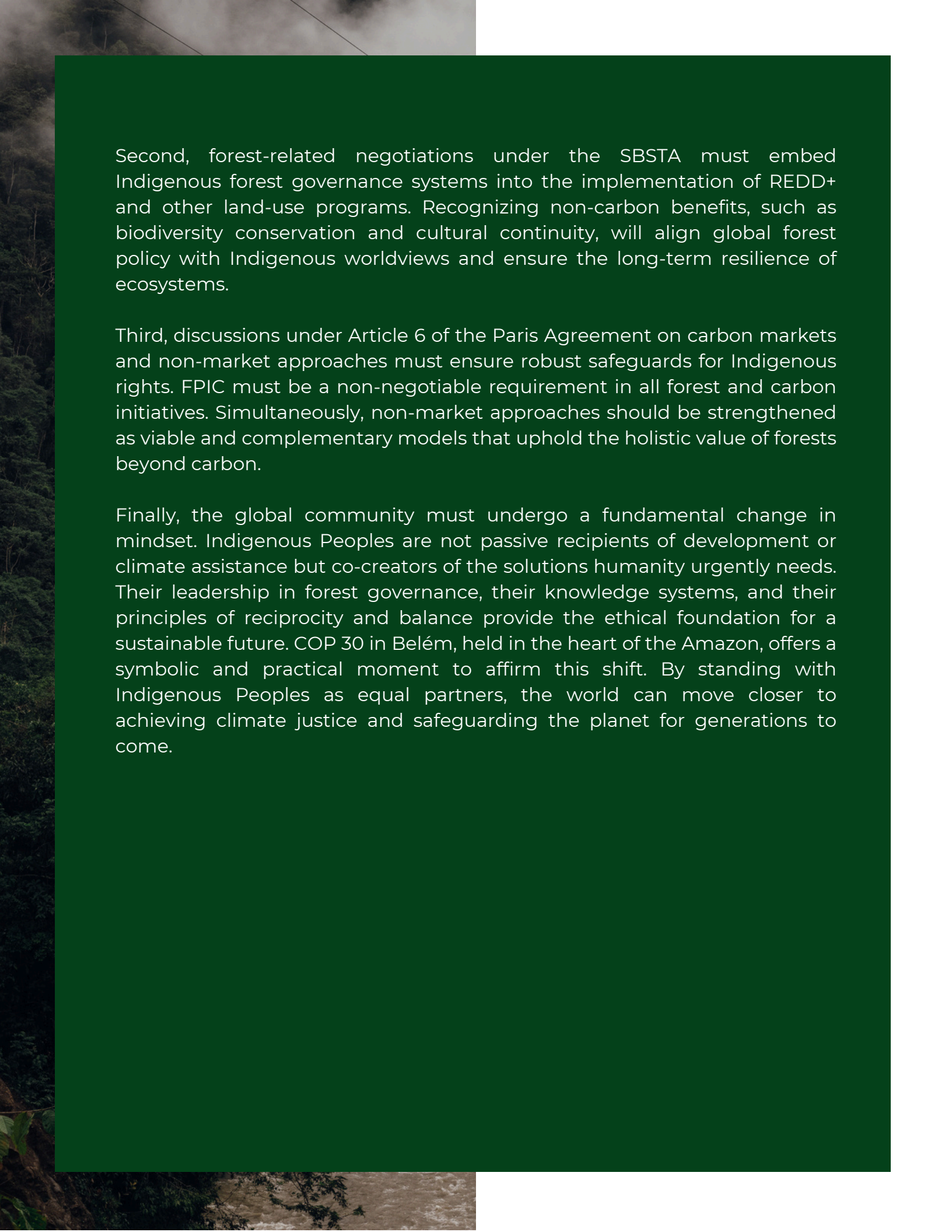
Theme	COP 30 agenda Link	Key issues	Indigenous Priorities
Sustainable Forest Management	SBSTA (Forests Land Use REDD+)	Integrity of forest mechanisms, non-carbon benefits	Recognize Indigenous forest governance.
Traditional Knowledge	LCIPP	Integration into policy, institutional participation	Co-decision-making and knowledge parity
Direct Finance	SCF,GCF, FRLD	Barriers to access, accreditation	Direct access, partnership-based funding
Carbon market and non-market-based approaches	Article 6	Rights safeguards, benefitsharing	FPIC, rights-based and transparent approaches

CONCLUSION

Across all agenda items leading to COP 30, one message stands firm and clear: Indigenous Peoples must be recognized as partners and leaders in shaping global climate solutions. Their systems of governance, traditional knowledge, and long-standing stewardship of forests offer not only moral guidance but also practical and proven pathways toward achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. Forests thrive where Indigenous rights are secured, and sustainable management flourishes when Indigenous leadership is respected. The positions of the FSC Indigenous Foundation build upon this conviction. The Foundation envisions a world where Indigenous-led forest governance is central to achieving sustainability and resilience. This vision is anchored in three interconnected priorities: the sustainable management of forests, the recognition of traditional knowledge, and direct finance for Indigenous organizations. These pillars form the foundation of an equitable climate response that bridges global commitments with local realities.

Sustainable forest management must place Indigenous Peoples at the center, recognizing that their customary laws, spiritual relationships with the land, and collective decision-making structures embody the essence of sustainability. Traditional knowledge should be fully integrated into climate policies and programs as an equal partner to scientific knowledge, creating a balanced approach that draws strength from both innovation and tradition. Meanwhile, direct access to finance must move from rhetoric to reality. Indigenous organizations need predictable, flexible, and long-term funding that empowers them to lead climate solutions rather than merely implement often unsuitable projects designed elsewhere. This requires trust, partnership, and reform in how climate funds are structured and governed.

To move forward toward COP 30, several steps are essential. First, Parties to the UNFCCC and climate finance institutions must institutionalize Indigenous participation across negotiation spaces. Mechanisms such as the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) and the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) should not only consult Indigenous representatives but involve them in co-decision-making processes. Indigenous Peoples must have the authority to influence the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies that directly affect their lands and communities.



Second, forest-related negotiations under the SBSTA must embed Indigenous forest governance systems into the implementation of REDD+ and other land-use programs. Recognizing non-carbon benefits, such as biodiversity conservation and cultural continuity, will align global forest policy with Indigenous worldviews and ensure the long-term resilience of ecosystems.

Third, discussions under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement on carbon markets and non-market approaches must ensure robust safeguards for Indigenous rights. FPIC must be a non-negotiable requirement in all forest and carbon initiatives. Simultaneously, non-market approaches should be strengthened as viable and complementary models that uphold the holistic value of forests beyond carbon.

Finally, the global community must undergo a fundamental change in mindset. Indigenous Peoples are not passive recipients of development or climate assistance but co-creators of the solutions humanity urgently needs. Their leadership in forest governance, their knowledge systems, and their principles of reciprocity and balance provide the ethical foundation for a sustainable future. COP 30 in Belém, held in the heart of the Amazon, offers a symbolic and practical moment to affirm this shift. By standing with Indigenous Peoples as equal partners, the world can move closer to achieving climate justice and safeguarding the planet for generations to come.

ABOUT THE FSC INDIGENOUS FOUNDATION

The FSC Indigenous Foundation works to ensure that Indigenous Peoples' rights, knowledge systems, and governance practices are at the center of sustainable forest management and development. Through partnerships, capacity-building, and direct support, the Foundation advances Indigenous-led forest solutions that promote well-being, resilience, and biodiversity.

Its mission aligns with the vision of the Forest Stewardship Council: *Forests for All, Forever*. By partnering with Indigenous Peoples, the FSC-Indigenous Foundation seeks to elevate Indigenous Peoples traditional knowledge and governance systems related to forest stewardship thereby contributing to a future where forests thrive, cultures flourish and climate and biodiversity goals are achieved.