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**Statement of**  
**Mr. Francisco Cali-Tzay**  
**Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples**

**Human Rights Council 51th Session**

**Geneva, 28 September 2022**

Mr. President,

Distinguished delegates,

Indigenous peoples' representatives,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address the Human Rights Council and present my annual report. This year my report focuses on the role of Indigenous women as scientific and technical knowledge keepers and of the importance that this knowledge continues to be preserved and transmitted.

Indigenous women are custodians of vital knowledge spanning across diverse realms including food and agriculture, health and medicine, natural resource management, language, crafts, and spiritual practices. Their knowledge is acquired based on observations and refined through practices, which have been transmitted across generations of indigenous peoples.

As my report sets out, Indigenous women's knowledge is critical to maintaining cultural identity; managing the risks and impacts of climate change; protecting biodiversity; achieving sustainable development; and building resilience in the face of pandemics and other extreme events. For example, around the world, Indigenous women play a key role in food security by managing community seed banks. Their custodian role strengthens our resilience to climate change by preserving threatened varieties of seeds.

Indigenous languages are disappearing at a critical rate and with them invaluable knowledge and culture is being lost around the world. Indigenous women urgently call for indigenous language education programmes to be developed, resourced and implemented, in consultation with Indigenous women, to support intergenerational knowledge transmission.

One of the main concerns that many Indigenous women have shared with me relates to the lack of legal protection and intellectual property rights over their knowledge. Indigenous art and culture has been exploited for tourism and commercial gain. In some cases, indigenous knowledge of plants has been misappropriated by pharmaceutical or agricultural companies without permission and with no recognition or remuneration for the Indigenous knowledge owners.

My report also highlights best practices by Indigenous Peoples and States. Examples include the design and implementation of cross-cultural women's health initiatives. The integration of Indigenous medical practices in State-run or State-funded clinics serves the dual purpose of making medical services more available to Indigenous women and at the same time fosters the transmission and preservation of indigenous scientific knowledge of healing practices.

Mr. President,

Today I am also presenting the report from my official country visit to Costa Rica in December 2021. During my visit, I observed the significant discrimination and poverty that Indigenous Peoples continue to suffer and how this affects their access to justice, education, health and political participation.

I am concerned about the various attacks on Indigenous leaders for defending their lands, territories and natural resources. In most cases, the underlying cause is the lack of implementation of the land demarcation and restitution process prescribed by law, which results in the lack of land tenure for Indigenous Peoples. I call on the Government of Costa Rica to ensure a constructive dialogue in good faith with Indigenous Peoples to address and resolve land rights concerns.

I welcome that the Government has adopted a consultation mechanism that seeks to conform to international human rights standards, and I urge the legislative assembly and the judiciary to develop their own consultation procedures with the participation of Indigenous Peoples.!

Mr. President,

During the past year, I have continued to receive a high number of reports regarding violations of indigenous peoples' rights from around the world. These range from violations taking place in the context of conservation measures and violence in relation to development projects, such as mining, transport and tourism projects, and include restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and assembly and attacks against indigenous human rights defenders. Environmental pollution, including of water sources, is an increasing concern.

In terms of future official country visits during my mandate period, I hope to undertake such visits to Tanzania, Chad, Namibia, Canada, Thailand, Argentina and to conclude the official visit initiated to Denmark and Greenland by my predecessor. I will continue to seek country visits to Africa and Asia and urge States in these regions to accept requests to visit officially.

I will now conclude my statement. I thank you for your attention and for the opportunity to engage in dialogue with everybody present here today.

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