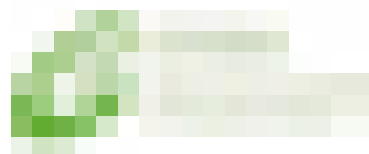
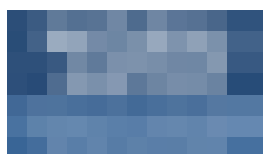




# African Indigenous Peoples and the UNEP Green Economy Initiative

||Hui!gaeb Report on  
Green Economy, Equity & Green Governance



**African Indigenous Peoples and the UNEP Green Economy Initiative:  
|| Hui!gaeb Report\* on Green Economy, Equity & Green Governance**

**August 15-16, 2011**

**Medindi Manor, Cape Town, South Africa**

*\* || Hui!gaeb is the Khoekhoegowab indigenous name for what is now the city of Cape Town.*

**ORGANISERS:** Hosted and facilitated by the **Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC)** and **Natural Justice (Lawyers for Communities and the Environment)**<sup>1</sup> in co-operation with the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** and the **Open Society Institute of Southern Africa (OSISA)**.

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<sup>1</sup> Natural Justice is supported by the Shuttleworth Foundation. IPACC's core programming is supported by Bread for the World (DE) and Norwegian Church Aid.

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## Executive Summary

THE UN Environment Program (UNEP) has released a report on the Green Economy Initiative (GEI), which is a major theme for the upcoming UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. The GEI represents a central element in international policy about responding to the crisis of global climate instability, the rapid decline in biodiversity and the serious threats these pose to peace and well-being on the planet. The GEI offers some important ideas about moving to a low carbon economy, but is based on some questionable premises, including its exclusion of the role of civil society and the rights of Indigenous Peoples to conserve and sustain the biodiversity in their traditional territories.

From August 15-16, 2011, IPACC and Natural Justice facilitated a workshop of African indigenous leaders from nine African countries to study the content of the Green Economy Initiative, develop a critical understanding of its recommendations, assumptions and purpose, articulate a response, and issue a formal statement and a response document to be submitted to UNEP.



## The main conclusions of the workshop included:

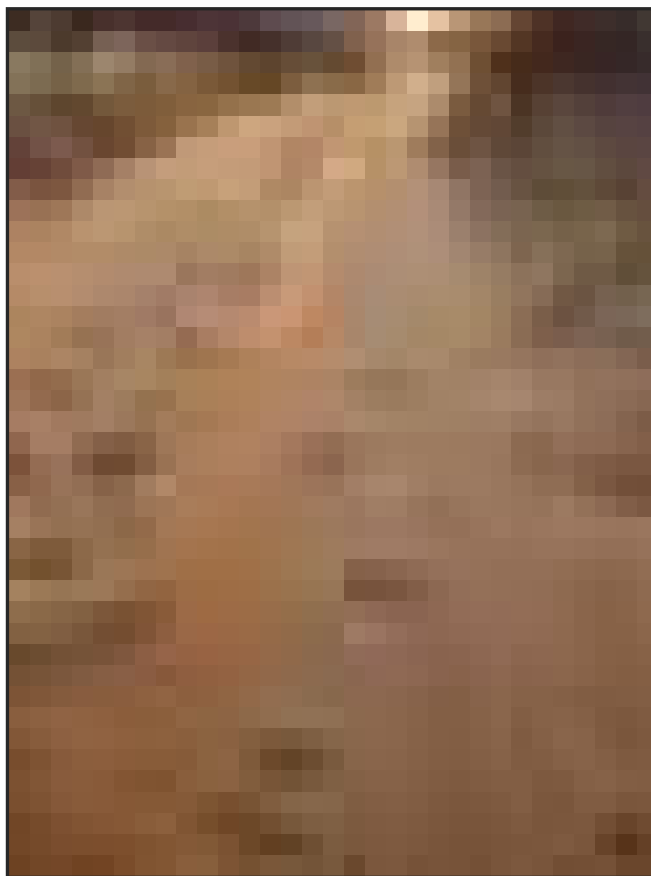
- GEI is an important contribution to integrating the value of the environment into national and multilateral economic analyses and planning. GEI helps national governments move away from the idea that natural resources are 'free', and requires them to engage in accurate cost benefit analyses before causing further loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the name of 'development';
- GEI's most valuable aspect is that it encourages an inter-sectoral consideration of the value of biodiversity and resilient ecosystems, thus moving from the idea that this is the responsibility of Environment Ministers, and bringing greater attention to the role of Finance Ministers, Agriculture, Mines and Industry, Fisheries and so forth;
- IPACC values the attention of UNEP and the GEI to the issues of equity and the disproportionate impact of biodiversity loss on Indigenous Peoples and other communities reliant on natural resources;
- IPACC calls on UNEP and African governments to give more attention to the role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as stewards of biodiversity – this is a foundational principle of the Convention on Biological Diversity yet it is notably ignored in the GEI. IPACC reaffirms the Agenda 21 principle of sustainability being a multi-stakeholder process;
- IPACC highlights that greater attention needs to be given to protecting the rights of local stewards of biodiversity and ecosystems. GEI must also address the problem of State Parties failing to comply with the Rio Conventions and ensure due process and the respect of fundamental rights of Indigenous Peoples, with specific reference to secure land tenure and the maintenance of traditional institutions of governance and knowledge systems;
- IPACC notes that the GEI is naive about the relationship between the State and the private sector, ignoring the growing power of multinational corporations to hold undue influence over national governments and ruling political parties;
- IPACC emphasises that there is a misuse of the term '*natural capital*' in the GEI. If UNEP is saying that all nature should be considered as 'capital', this negates the argument for the **inherent value** of nature and the importance of intergenerational obligations for sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems. IPACC recommends that the term '*natural capital*' be dropped from the GEI as it is inaccurate and contradictory to the main message of the report; and
- IPACC notes that Payment for Ecosystems Services provides new economic opportunities for rural communities, however this must be tempered by the primacy of access to sustainable use of biodiversity (as set out in the CBD and the Addis Ababa Principles & Guidelines), and it must be effected within a rights-based framework, preferably adhering to emerging norms of Free Prior and Informed Consent.



## Workshop Summary

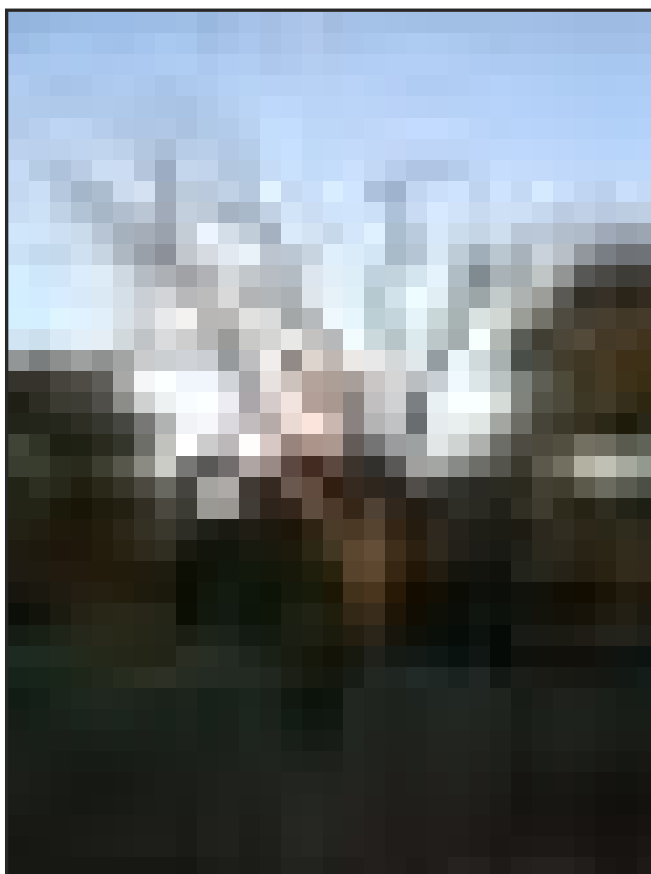
**Objectives of the two day workshop of indigenous leaders were as follows:**

- Analyse the GEI and the relationship between this development model and key indigenous concerns about self-determination, stewardship of natural resources, access and benefit sharing, and reforms to the multilateral environmental governance system being considered at Rio+20.
- Generate a statement of African Indigenous Principles in relation to GEI, governance and rights to be presented and discussed at the Global Indigenous Caucus in Manaus, Brazil (August 22-24, 2011).
- Set up an action plan for sharing insights and views about the Green Economy and Green Governance with the African Group of Negotiators in the Rio Convention system and with influential policy bodies such as the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment; and (AMCEN), UNEP, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Global Indigenous Caucus and IPACC's members and allies.



### **Outcomes of the Workshop:**

- ||Hui!gaeb - Cape Town Declaration on the Green Economy / Green Governance (delivered to the indigenous global caucus in Manaus, Brazil);
- Statement of IPACC Recommendations to UNEP and African State Parties to the Rio Conventions on the Green Economy Initiative and the need for robust Green Governance (submitted to UNEP and AMCEN); and
- IPACC – Natural Justice Workshop Report on the Green Economy Initiative and Green Governance with accompanying action plan.



## Background of the Meeting:

The UN Environment Program (UNEP) has released a report on the **GEI**, a major theme for the upcoming **UN Earth Summit 2012** (known as Rio+20)<sup>2</sup>, the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic UN Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) which was held from June 3-14, 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

IPACC holds one of the two seats for Indigenous Peoples in the UNEP Major Groups system. IPACC's intention is to contribute a policy position on the Green Economy Initiative in line with African indigenous values, indigenous economics and the norms and standards inherent in the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

All of the Rio Conventions are failing to meet their targets<sup>3</sup>, and there is a growing sense that the UN approach to environmental governance is flawed. Rio+20 will be an important occasion for Indigenous Peoples and others in civil society to call for a more duty bound, inclusive approach to governance that empowers a variety of actors and rights holders, rather than an approach that sees the State and private sector as competent to act on their own.



The UNEP Report<sup>4</sup> aims to provide a macroeconomic analysis of policy reforms and investments in green sectors (i.e. sectors with a low Green House Gas emissions level) and in greening brown sectors (i.e. reducing GHG emissions from established economic sectors and industries). The GEI summary report emphasizes the economic benefits of transitioning to a green economy and investing in renewable energy and resource efficiency. The UNEP report assesses how sectors – such as renewable energies, clean and efficient technologies, waste and water management, and sustainable agriculture – can contribute to economic growth, job creation, and poverty alleviation, while addressing climate change and environmental risks.

The key agents identified in this transition are the State and the private sector. The primary argument is made to policy makers, to encourage them to recognise the medium and long term value of greening the current economic system and providing the private sector with incentives to grow capacity and create jobs in sectors that will assist with protecting natural ecosystems and reduce GHG emissions into the global atmosphere. The argument is based in part on the principle that ecosystems services are economic resources which are not assessed in national economic planning. Investment in ecosystem conservation pays dividends in avoiding poverty, conservation of the soils and water on which humans and agriculture depend, and which through degradation are increasing poverty and other dangerous pathologies.

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.earthsummit2012.org/>

<sup>3</sup> See <http://gbo3.cbd.int/>

<sup>4</sup> UNEP, 2011, Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication - A Synthesis for Policy Makers. [www.unep.org/greeneconomy](http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy).

IPACC agrees with the UNEP analysis that the world is facing a series of crises in regards to impacts of climate change, food and water shortages, volatile markets, and environmental degradation and climate variability. The current economic model of growth, consumption and a lack of wisdom and accountability is not sustainable and is placing life on Earth at grave risk. The GEI is meant to signal a meaningful engagement with key stakeholders to address climate change and environmental degradation. There is a risk that the green economy focus merely displaces the main questions, failing to recognise the amoral character of the modern private sector, and the transformation of the State into a facilitator of extractive economic behaviour, to support national elites, rather than going back to core human values of respect for biodiversity, a moral obligation to ensure inter-generational sustainability, and a faith-based / belief-based reverence for the relationship between nature, local territories, and one's own sense of identity and culture.

The focus of IPACC's response is critical support for the GEI, and a call for greater attention to balancing the Green Economy approach with the need for **Green Governance**, highlighting the historical evidence that the state and the private sector have failed to meet commitments under the Rio Conventions, and the conviction that a sustainable future requires a robust system of governance that protects ecosystems and local stewardship against the threats posed by extractive industries and forms of 'development' that are detrimental to bio-cultural diversity.

Indigenous Peoples have the lowest carbon emissions in Africa with highly adaptive land and natural resource governance systems that are threatened by national authorities who frequently make decisions based on profit rather than according to sustainability criteria. Greater attention needs to be given to legally empowering Indigenous Peoples as stewards of nature, particularly ensuring land tenure rights and being assisted by the international system to constrain behaviour by national states and the private sector that undermines indigenous governance, value systems and sustainability. African Indigenous Peoples are holders of valuable traditional ecological knowledge, which has thus far been stigmatised and marginalised from sustainable environmental and economic policy making. Using indigenous Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) could help facilitate a transition to a fully low-carbon economy, a point entirely ignored by the GEI / UNEP.

IPACC leaders also noted with concern the misleading use of certain economic terms and assumptions. The GEI report makes use of the term 'natural capital', which suggests that nature's value is only recognised in terms of its commodity value in a market economy. IPACC members and many other Africans reject such Western reductionism. To refer to nature as 'capital' implies it must be able to be converted into cash, bought, sold and used as a commodity to be part of the circuit that gives capital its value. Nature has many values, including its ecosystem services which are trans-generational and should not be drawn into unstable commodity markets. Examples of other values of nature which do not permit their consumption or alienation

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