

Bonn: Indigenous peoples' knowledge and wisdom valuable to climate adaptation, Peruvian activists say

7 November 2017 – Peruvian indigenous activists at the United Nations Climate Conference ([COP23](#)) in Bonn, Germany, made a strong call Tuesday for indigenous peoples to be part of the solution to tackling climate change, emphasizing their traditional wisdom and practical knowledge about adaptation methods.

“We don't want to speak only about climate change but about climate catastrophe [...] What can we do? There are alternatives, especially from the indigenous peoples, especially from the wisdom of indigenous women,” said Roberto Espinoza, Advisor for the Interethnic Association for the development of the Peruvian Rainforest (Asociation Interetnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana – AIDESEP), at a press conference.

Rosalía Yampis, Director of the Women's Program in AIDESEP, also highlighted the “very important role” indigenous women can have in climate adaptation.

“Women have this ancestral knowledge about seeds and what we have to sow,” she told the press conference. She added that indigenous peoples are providing input to Peru's national contribution to the [Paris Agreement](#) in protecting the watershed.

There are about 13 million indigenous peoples in Peru. As a national indigenous rights organization, AIDESEP works to improve the health, education and housing of these peoples. It is a member organization of the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA).

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According to AIDESEP, “it is amply demonstrated that indigenous territories are fundamental for the conservation of forests.” In them, generally, “deforestation is minimal, even less than in some protected natural areas. Therefore, today, one of the main strategies to counteract the loss and degradation of forests in the Peruvian Amazon is to ensure the safety and sustainable management of these territories,” explains the organization on its website.

“There are alternatives with the wisdom and knowledge of our peoples. We, as indigenous peoples, are working on these alternatives,” said Janio Sangama, from the region of San Martín, which is mostly located in the upper part of the Peruvian Amazon rainforest. “When we speak about sustainable development, we are looking after the management of our resources in a more orderly way.

We worry about deforestation,” he added. “In San Martin, we had a big flood. We have a proposal called ‘hand in hand with Government’ to confront these natural catastrophes.”

He said that the indigenous peoples have begun sustainable production or orderly production with technologies from communities. “We have been managing alternative crops in our territories. We are not destroying our forest,” he underscored.

Roberto Espinoza said that “water is being reduced because of deforestation. So we are sowing water – even if it sounds bizarre – with some special plants indigenous people know that can enhance the water cycle underground,” he added.

Regarding reforestation, Jammek Manikusi, a member of AIDSESEP, said indigenous people are concerned about the use of exotic plants, like pine and eucalyptus. “These plants have impacts on the soil. We want a natural reforestation with natural wisdom of the peoples, with more proper methodologies, more adapted to natural regeneration of soils in the Amazon.”