

# FOREST DEFENDERS: NEW THREATS AND NEW RESPONSES

Tuesday, 23 April 2019 | 18:30-20:00

Conference Room 4 | United Nations Secretariat, New York

Official Side Event for the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)

Tropical forests are critical for addressing climate change and achieving sustainable development. They are also home to indigenous peoples and forests communities, who have protected and managed them for generations, and now find themselves on the front lines of the deforestation crisis, their lives and livelihoods threatened by illegal logging and mining operators, poachers, agribusiness, drug traffickers and even governments. In 2017 alone, 207 environmental defenders were killed protecting their lands, territories and forests from destruction, a disproportionate number of them indigenous people. As the threats to forest defenders are growing, new responses are also emerging. This side event will showcase several new and innovative initiatives that are defending the defenders of forests and can inform future work in this area.

Host and Moderator: **Alec Baldwin**, Actor & Activist

## Opening Invocation

**Benki Piyako**, Shaman, Ashaninka people of the Amazon

## Introductory Remarks

**Reverend Fletcher Harper**, Executive Director, GreenFaith and member of the Global Steering Committee of the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative

*The role of religious leaders in defending environmental defenders*

**Vicky Tauli-Corpuz**, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and member of the Global Steering Committee of the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative

*Global Campaign Against Criminalizing of Indigenous Peoples*

A brief introduction to the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI), an international, multi-faith alliance working to bring moral urgency and faith-based leadership to global efforts to protect tropical forests and the rights of indigenous peoples. This event is organized by IRI to compile lessons from existing initiatives about best practices in defending the defenders of rainforests and explore where religious leaders and faith communities can add value to this effort.

## Threats to Forest Defenders and New Responses

**Andy White**, Coordinator, Rights & Resources Initiative (RRI)

*Overview of threats and update on new initiatives to stop criminalization of defenders*

**Gregorio Diaz Mirabal**, General Coordinator, Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (COICA)

*Status of forest defenders in the Amazon and new programs including the Andes-Amazon-Atlantic Corridor and the Sacred Headwaters of the Amazon initiative*

**Carole Excell**, Acting Director, Environmental Democracy Practice, World Resources Institute

*Raising the bar on advocacy and action: Update on the work of the Defending Land & Environmental Defenders Coalition*

**Patricia Gualinga**, Kichwa people, Sarayaku, Ecuador

*Amazonian Women Defenders Against Extraction*

**Leila Salazar-López**, Executive Director, Amazon Watch

*International solidarity to protect the Amazon and defend indigenous land defenders*

**Alexander von Bismarck**, Executive Director, Environmental Investigation Agency

*New technologies and systems on the ground to empower and protect environmental defenders*

**Sonia Guajajara**, National Coordinator, Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB)

*Responding to rollbacks to and attacks on indigenous rights and territories*

*Video, "Aruanas" TV Series and campaign, featuring Beatriz Azeredo, Director of Social Responsibility, Globo TV*

A showcase of new and innovative approaches to defending the defenders of forests by raising their profiles, securing their rights, and creating political space for them to continue their important work. Featured initiatives include emerging international campaigns, faith-based mobilization projects, an innovative TV series, and new technologies to protect forest defenders.

This section will also include reflections from indigenous leaders on the threats facing forest defenders, what indigenous peoples and forest communities on the frontlines see as the most promising interventions for creating enduring change, and guidance for movements looking to partner with indigenous peoples and make their safety a main focus of their advocacy and mobilization efforts.

### Responses from Governments

**HE Carolyn Bennett**, Minister of Indigenous Relations, Government of Canada

**HE Mona Juul**, Ambassador to the United Nations, Government of Norway

**Interfaith Rainforest Initiative and the UN Human Rights Council resolution on environmental human rights defenders**

Reflections from governments actively promoting forest protection and the rights of indigenous peoples on their motivations and commitment to continue to support this issue, and a call to other governments to adopt, fulfill and expand upon existing commitments to defend forest defenders.

### Closing Remarks

**Alec Baldwin**, Actor & Activist



Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment

