

- 1. Title/Heading:** Amazon Sacred Headwaters Initiative: Initial results and contributions to global climate change mitigation and adaptation
- 2. Context and rationale.**

The [Amazon Sacred Headwaters initiative](#) was launched at the Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco, in September 2018. Since then, important progress has been made advancing implementation. A MOU was signed between CONFENIAE (11 nationalities, Ecuador) and AIDSESEP (Peruvian Amazon indigenous organization, with 9 regional organizations from north, center and southern Amazon), and additionally other Wampis, and Awajun and Huitoto Peruvian groups. The MOU has an objective to develop a common vision among all IP groups regarding the cosmovision on these territories. The Ministries of Environment and Foreign Affairs Ministries in Ecuador (through UNDP's program Proamazonia) and Peru know and support this initiative.

In Ecuador, this initiative is supporting the implementation of the National REDD+ Action Plan and therefore contributes to achieving Ecuador's Nationally Determined Contribution. It has been closely coordinated with the Ministry of Environment, and directly supported by the ProAmazonia Programme, a GCF and GEF program implemented through UNDP.

Initial data has been collected including maps, a geodatabase and life plans of these territories, as well as initial legal framework analysis. There are initial resources of 700K from individual donor contributions, channeled through a consortium made of Amazon Watch, Pachamama Alliance, CONFENIAE, AIDSESEP.

- By 2020, the Sacred Headwaters Alliance will define a regional ecological plan to present formally to the Governments of Peru and Ecuador.
- Amazon Watch, Pachamama Alliance and other allies are supporting the international campaign.
- A global commission for the Sacred Waters Initiative is currently being assembled, and has been tasked looking at life models, alternative energies, and alternative models to extractive industries, to develop a set of recommendations for the States.

At the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit, the Amazon Headwaters Initiative would announce the following contribution:

25 nationalities legitimate indigenous peoples organizations from Ecuador in Peru commit to protecting and defending around 30 million hectares has of tropical forests in indigenous territories, and call for 1) complete the land-titling process and fulfill the FPIC process requirements 2) Call on governments to promote sustainable ecological land-use practices around these IP territories 3) call on the international community and donors to channel financing in alignment of life plans of indigenous territories

### **3. An overview of the contribution.**

The Sacred Headwaters region of Ecuador and Peru is composed of the ancestral territories of a dozen indigenous nations, adjoined by a number of protected areas, together forming a vast contiguous mosaic containing the most biologically diverse terrestrial ecosystem on Earth. These rainforests are critical carbon sinks and help to stabilize our global climate and rainfall and yet, they are facing a chronic and ever-increasing risk from extractive industries.

The Amazon Sacred Headwaters Initiative is building a shared vision among indigenous peoples, NGOs, the philanthropic community, social entrepreneurs and governments towards establishing a bi-national protected region – off-limits to industrial scale resource extraction, and governed in accordance with traditional indigenous principles of cooperation and harmony that foster a mutually enhancing human-Earth relationship.

The Initiative is led by Amazonian indigenous federations CONFENIAE (Ecuador) and AIDSESEP (Peru) in partnership with Pachamama Alliance, Amazon Watch, and Fundación Pachamama and aims to advance bioregional and indigenous-led governance and stewardship of this vast region.

### **4. How the contribution leverages living natural systems as a solution to avert climate change?**

By focusing in ensuring the conservation of existing indigenous territories and protected areas in the Amazon, and protecting them from conversion, the initiative directly leverages the Amazon living natural systems as a climate change solution.

The Sacred Headwaters Initiative is built on an overarching theory of change with a proven track record in the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazon: Backing indigenous peoples' collective stewardship of their biodiverse ancestral lands delivers the greatest level of protection for the Amazon rainforest.

### **5. How might the contribution support both climate, mitigation and adaptation as well as other important co-benefits and social, economic and environmental outcomes in coming years.**

The Amazon Sacred Headwaters Initiative seeks to forge a new, post-carbon model for the region, off-limits to industrial-scale resource extraction and where fossil fuels are left in the ground.

The Initiative offers a multi-faceted strategy on climate change through working to:

- Protect indigenous territories in the region that encompasses a continuous mosaic of 60 million acres of rainforest and contains some 3.8 billion metric tons of carbon (on average 66 metric tons of carbon/acre of forest).
- Advance indigenous forest stewardship of these lands as the most effective strategy to protect the rainforest and avoid significant emissions from unchecked deforestation.

- Forge a sustainable path that keeps undeveloped fossil fuel reserves in the ground, starting with the Sacred Headwaters. This would result in the avoidance of some 1.9 billion metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

## **6. Which countries and organizations are involved in the contribution?**

This is an initiative led by legitimate, **indigenous peoples' organizations** of Ecuador and Peru, involving the most important indigenous federations of the Amazon of both countries (CONFENIAE and AIDESEP) and their grassroots organizations.

The consortium of allies collaborating with the initiative is composed by Amazon Watch, Pachamama Alliance, and Fundación Pachamama. Also, the initiative is endorsed by the regional organization of indigenous peoples from the nine countries of the Amazon River Basin, COICA.

Support for selected activities at a country level is provided by UNDP.

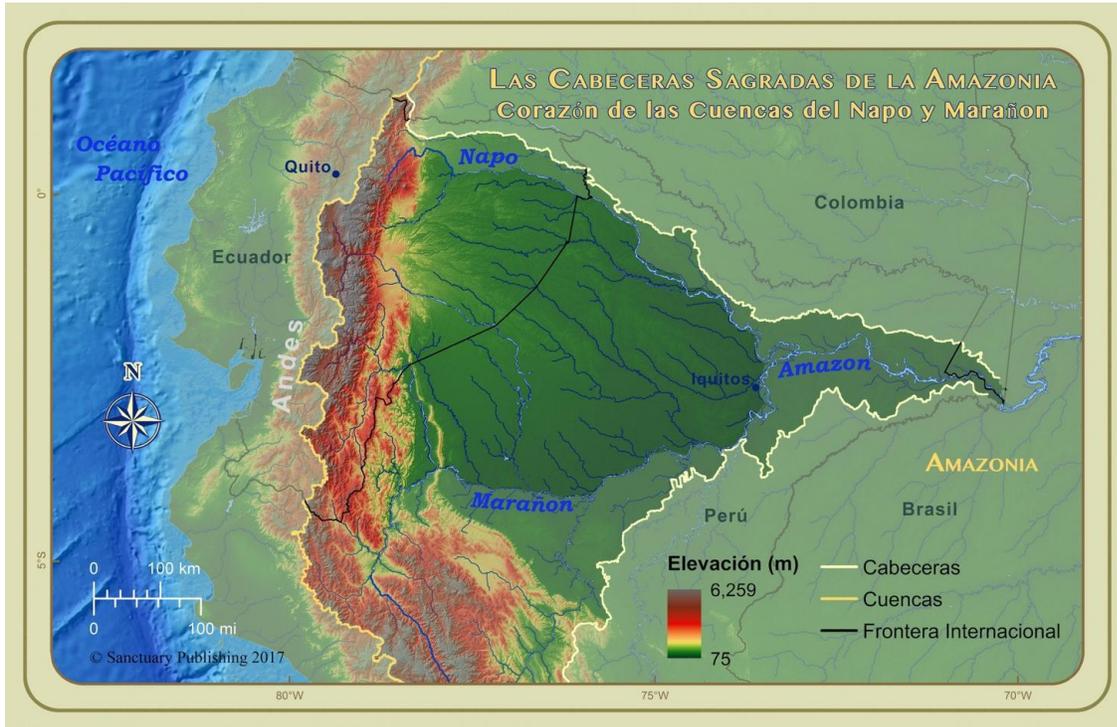
## **7. How have stakeholders (for example local communities, youth and indigenous peoples, where applicable) been consulted in developing the contribution?**

The initiative has been built by the indigenous regional federations of Ecuador and Peru, to ensure the legal rights of the indigenous stewards of the Amazon. The first track of the initial development phase was based on convening the indigenous nationalities of the region to forge a shared vision for the future of the headwaters region; build alliances; and strengthen their capacity to protect their territories. So far, five binational assemblies and several local meetings have been organized with the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples and nations to build the proposal for the Sacred Headwaters Initiative and gather the local proposals of grassroots communities for the protection of their territories based on their self-determination right.

## **8. Where can the contribution be put into action?**

The Initiative has already started to be implemented in the IP territories in Peru and Ecuador that are part of it. One of the most the most important goals is to unite indigenous peoples and strengthen alliances throughout the entire Napo-Marañon River Basins, expanding their collective purview to the larger bioregion. Viewing the strategy for protecting this region from the perspective of the entire river basin presents compelling and strategic opportunities to more effectively address regional threats brought by oil projects, dams, mining, and roads as well as to enhance the ecological and landscape connectivity. CONFENIAE in Ecuador, has become an important political actor that is able to talk directly with high-level government authorities and advocate in favor of the indigenous organizations. They have made important efforts for the unification of these organizations to create a political agenda for the entire Amazon region.

## Map of The Sacred Headwaters of the Amazon



**9. How the contribution will be delivered? How will different stakeholders be engaged in its implementation? What are the potential transformational impacts?**

The two-year development phase will lead to these outcomes (a) a strong regional alliance of key stakeholders—indigenous peoples, governments, civil society—aligned around a shared vision for the protection of the Sacred Headwaters region; (b) a regional ecological economic plan for the Sacred Headwaters agreed upon by all of the key stakeholders; and (c) a long-term funding plan agreed to by stakeholders with initial commitments in place; and (d) no further expansion of extractive industries including oil and mining and related infrastructure in the region.

This Initiative offers an exceptional opportunity to create and demonstrate a new ecologic-economic model to usher in the post-carbon era – one that both safeguards the vital heart of our Earth’s biosphere and enhances human wellbeing.

**10. Is this initiative contributing to other Climate Action Summit workstreams (industry transition; energy transition; climate finance and carbon pricing; infrastructure, cities and local action; resilience and adaptation; youth and citizen mobilization; social and political drivers; mitigation strategy)?**

This initiative also contributes directly to the resilience and adaptation stream, and indirectly to the following streams: social and political drivers, industry transition (by stopping expansion of the oil, gas, mining and infrastructure initiatives on the territories) Through a participatory multi-stakeholder regional planning process that includes government and civil society, the Amazon Sacred Headwaters Initiative will develop and publicly present a compelling plan backed with rigorous analysis for protecting the region's unparalleled biological and cultural wealth as a pathway for Ecuador and Peru to meet their countries’ development needs while also leading the inevitable economic transition beyond dependence on fossil fuels and towards an ecological civilization.

**11. How does this contribution build upon examples of experience to date? How does the contribution link with different ongoing initiatives?**

The Initiative will identify existing experiences and mechanisms already employed by other, similar large landscape conservation initiatives and economic transition zones (e.g. jurisdictions where coal mining or logging has been halted). Incorporate the lessons learned in Canada's Great Bear Rainforest and in Brazil’s Xingu Indigenous Park. For instance, in the summer of 2017, a commission of allies from the SHW Initiative traveled to British Columbia and met with activists and indigenous groups who successfully organized the Great Bear Rainforest campaign. The lessons of the Great Bear Rainforest are being incorporated, and a delegation from the Great Bear Rainforest and the United Nations Environment Program travelled to Ecuador/Peru in February 2018.

In addition, local proposals and ongoing initiatives from the region are already being incorporated and promoted through the Sacred Headwaters Initiative, such as the Kawsak Sacha

proposal from the Sarayaku Kichwa People, the Kamunkui Community Reserve from the Sapara Nationality, the SACRE Achuar System for Ecological Reserves, among others.

## **12. What are the mechanisms for funding (with specific emphasis on potential for partnerships)?**

Currently the Initiative is administered by a Consortium made up from CONFENIAE, AIDSEP, Amazon Watch, Pachamama Alliance and Fundación Pachamama.

At a country level, the Initiative is supported by UNDP through its ProAmazonia project in Ecuador, and through land-titling and zoning activities in Peru.

## **13. What are the means of stewardship, metrics for monitoring?**

The Initiative will develop and present a set of strategic frameworks, alternative development pathways, and scenarios for an economic transition to a post-carbon era—aimed at safeguarding the ecological integrity of the Sacred Headwaters region and ensuring human well-being. Concurrent with the consultation and alliance building and based on the results from the regional gatherings including "the shared vision", the Ecological Planning Working Group of the Initiative will conduct research, analysis, and surveys, and facilitate indigenous peoples' own bio-cultural mapping. Mapping provides geospatial analysis for planning at the larger landscape scales. Compiling and integrating layers of information such as pending indigenous lands claims, industrial threats, wildlife corridors, hunting grounds, protection status, ecosystem types and biodiversity data, population data, access routes and fluvial links, helps the alliance establish priorities and make sound governance decisions.

Work will be carried out and guided by indigenous leaders and technical teams to weave together a tapestry of indigenous life plans, further flesh out implementation and find emergent threads. Examples of potential emergent threads include developing capacity for implementing self-reliant renewable energy and/or transportation systems; training and coordination for watershed restoration and water quality management; establishing a regional hub for incubating and innovating solutions.

Conduct research focusing on solutions and alternatives to current growth-focused economic models that are based on export-driven resource extraction industries and that instead focus on alternative indicators of wellbeing such as psychological and spiritual health, community vitality, and ecological health and resilience.

The research will include exploration of models of indigenous co-governance in other parts of the Amazon or the world, sustainable livelihoods, alternative currencies, land use management and ecological zoning, and best practices in indigenous-led and community-based conservation areas/wildlife corridors, health, food ways, education, communication and transportation systems.

#### **14. What is the communication strategy?**

The Sacred Headwaters will focus on building a strong coherent narrative and a communications platform and strategy that ultimately elevates the visibility of this region and builds a network of support among both the public in Ecuador and Peru as well as globally. The Communications Working Group of the Initiative will develop a communications plan to popularize the global importance of the bioregion – producing compelling, interactive maps based on scientific information, and visual content, and use storytelling and media campaigns to build public support for the Initiative. The Working Group will organize and mobilize opinion leaders, journalists, influencer networks, celebrities, scientists, and academics in support of the Initiative. The Communications Working Group will organize and support capacity building, media skills training for indigenous leaders to support their own storytelling and advocacy. Through the above tools, generate debate and amplify the importance of indigenous climate solutions, the biodiversity of the region, the ecological functions the Amazon provides, the concept of protecting sacred areas, alternative development models, energy and climate policy, and the topic of unburnable carbon.

#### **15. What are the details of proponents (indicating the degree of commitment among the countries and organizations that are named).**

**AIDSESEP: The Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest** (Spanish: Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana - AIDSESEP) is a Peruvian national indigenous rights organization, presided over by a decentralized National Council. The organization is comprised of 57 federations and territorial organizations and represents 1,500 communities of roughly 650,000 indigenous people who speak a plurality of languages. Members of AIDSESEP work to improve the health, education, housing, and organization of indigenous peoples. It is also a member of the Coordinating body of Indigenous organization of the Amazon Basin, COICA.

**Amazon Watch:** Founded in 1996, Amazon Watch's mission is to protect the rainforest and advance the rights of indigenous peoples in the Amazon Basin. With offices in Oakland, California, Washington, DC, and Quito, Ecuador and programs in Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and Colombia, Amazon Watch plays a critical bridging function between indigenous communities on the frontlines of emblematic natural resource and rights battles and international decision-makers and influencers, employing a savvy media and engagement strategy to elevate understanding of the need to conserve Amazonian ecosystems. In addition to ensuring the presence, participation, and visibility of Amazonian indigenous leaders in the media and at influential events such as the UN climate summits, Amazon Watch supports capacity building, media skills and leadership training. Amazon Watch's expertise in the field and over 22 years of experience as a principled and trusted indigenous ally have uniquely positioned the organization to compellingly shape the global narrative on why we must defend the Amazon in a manner that is both effective and just.

**CONFENIAE: The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon** (Spanish: La Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana - CONFENIAE) is the regional organization of indigenous peoples in the Ecuadorian Amazon or Oriente region. Eleven indigenous peoples present in the region — Kichwa, Shuar, Achuar, Waorani, Siona, Secoya, Shiwiar, Sápara, Andwa, Cofán, and Kijus— are represented by the Confederation. CONFENIAE is one of three major regional groupings that constitute the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE). It is also a member of the Coordinating body of Indigenous organization of the Amazon Basin, COICA.

**Fundación Pachamama:** Fundación Pachamama has 20 years of experience working hand-in-hand with the indigenous nations in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Our mission is to promote an alternative and innovative development model based on Well-being or *sumak kawsay*, with emphasis on recognizing and respecting human rights and the rights of nature, to generate the necessary conditions for the nationalities and first peoples of the Amazon, just like other social groups in Andean countries and Amazonian watersheds, strengthen their autonomy, self-determination, territorial defense and ways of life. Pachamama's work has been based on strengthening indigenous organizations, conserving and titling ancestral lands, promoting alternative development models and management plans for sustainable use of natural resources and guaranteeing rights of indigenous peoples.

**Pachamama Alliance:** Pachamama Alliance was established in 1995, and its mission is to empower indigenous people of the Amazon rainforest to preserve their lands and culture and, using insights gained from that work, to educate and inspire individuals everywhere to bring forth a thriving, just and sustainable world. The Pachamama Alliance's work in the Amazon is concentrated primarily in the southern region of Ecuador providing ongoing financial, logistical, legal, and technical support to the indigenous governing federations of this area. This work is carried out and monitored through its affiliate organization in Ecuador, Fundación Pachamama. Pachamama Alliance also delivers transformational educational programs around the world aimed at fostering and aiding the shift from our current growth driven industrial civilization to a sustainable and just ecological civilization.

**Main proponent:**

**Fundación Pachamama:** María Belén Paez, [belenpaez74@gmail.com](mailto:belenpaez74@gmail.com)