


# PREFACE





**Indigenous groups are unquestionably “peoples” in every political, social, cultural and ethnological meaning of this term. It is neither logical nor scientific to treat them as the same “peoples” as their neighbours, who obviously have different languages, histories and cultures. The United Nations should not pretend, for the sake of a convenient legal fiction, that those differences do not exist.**

*Erica-Irene Daez, Chair of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples. 1993.*



According to a May 2019 report of the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (established in 2012 as a United Nations organ responsible for responding to requests from states' governments) the world's "Nature and its vital contributions to people, which together embody biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are deteriorating worldwide" (IPBES 2019). Indeed, owing to unsustainable development practices by states' governments and their subordinate organizations (business, religions, non-governmental organizations and state government systems) the collective human activity focused on development now threatens the collapse of life supporting plant and animal foods and medicine systems worldwide. The targets of the development frenzy over the last few generations have been plants, animals, raw materials, and the lives and territories of Fourth World nations. Short-term commercial and financial gains have driven non-indigenous societies to take and consume Earth's living support systems faster than the Earth's ability to replenish. Fourth World nations have for several generations been warning local, regional and international institutions of the impending breakdown of life support systems and now the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services somewhat belatedly calls attention to the near-term collapse of biodiverse systems worldwide threatening the collapse of human societies.

Fourth World nations have been the target of this movement toward collapse through cold, warm and hot

wars, and more than 156 indigenous nation genocides since 1945. The combined effects unrestrained development (mineral, petroleum and gas extractions, deforestation, pollution of water, soils and air in Fourth World territories; and the test detonations of nuclear bombs and deposit of nuclear waste in the of Fourth World nations' territories cause serious health problems) contaminate living support systems and render them inaccessible for people to survive. The explosion of carbon dioxide into earth's atmosphere (more than 412 parts per million in 2019 where the relatively normal level is 250 part per million) has been demonstrated to not only change the climate and increase global temperatures, but also renders cultivated foods and wild foods and medicines less healthful due reductions in protein, zinc and iron minerals contributing to increased chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease as well as wasting, stunting and malnutrition. These extreme increases in photosynthetic changes in plant and ultimately animal metabolisms contribute to the collapse of biodiversity.

The biodiversity crisis Fourth World Nations called attention to in the late 1960s is now the ultimate of crises: In less than a generation of human life, the biodiverse systems—ecological systems that support life on the planet are destined to fail unless in just a few short years human beings stop denying the obvious adverse effects of unsustainable development and recognize that unrestrained development must come to an abrupt end. And of equal importance, state societies must stop exacting violence on Fourth World peoples, the only humans able to ensure a return to a balanced ecology when the state societies cease

their destructive development practices.

I discuss at length the various clashes between state societies and Fourth World nations that combine to form the core of senseless destruction that now threatens all life on the planet. I offer specific proposals for shifting international, regional and local policy gears to policies of coexistence; and the cession of unsustainable development in the biologically diverse regions of the world.

The world's more than 5000 Fourth World nations are at the center of virtually every major concern for the peace and security of all humanity. As modern-day successors of their ancestor peoples, these nations are the seed from which all of humanity springs. They occupy 80% of the world's remaining biodiverse territories in the world and they are responsible for sustaining biodiverse environments as a result of normal reciprocal relationship between human need and the capacity of Earth to restore itself—a balancing act. They possess the vast portion of all knowledge of natural plant-based and animal-based foods and medicines; and the world's Fourth World nations retain the world's foundational scientific knowledge systems on which all humanity basis its understanding of the material and immaterial worlds. The histories of most of these nations extend deep into antiquity affirming their social and economic resilience; and they sustain their cultural continuity through descendants who persist by their choices and actions as social, cultural, economic, political and strategic players in the conduct of domestic and international relations. Far from disappearing as some would suggest the little over 1.3 billion people (or about 18% of the hu-



man family) who make up these nations on virtually every continent adjust, adapt and evolve to meet the changing ecological, political and economic changes in the global theatre. But the persistent and unrestrained development challenges posed by states' governments presage bicultural as well as biodiversity collapse.

While Fourth World nations are variously referred to as “natives,” “indigenous,” “aboriginal,” and “first nations” among other terms the reality is that they individually apply names to themselves that most often translate simply as “people.” These different nations share at least one thing in common—they developed and practiced different knowledge systems rooted in the relationship between individuals and communities as well as to the land and the cosmos—they conceived of the “four directions” and understand themselves as peoples emerging in the Fourth World. This conception is most clearly stated by the Hopi people who understand that the Hopi have traveled through four transformations from their origin to the present day—they have emerged into the Fourth World. Secwépemc Grand Chief George Manuel traveled around the world as President of the Native Brotherhood in Canada and later as the President of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples during the 1970s in search of allies to support “land rights” rights for his people and other nations in Canada; and during his travels he discovered that nations in South America, Europe, Africa, the South Seas and Western Pacific as well as in North and Central America shared this vision of the Fourth World. Consequently “Fourth World nations” is a term of art that exceeds the accuracy and utility of “indigenous” or other variants. I

apply the expression throughout this volume.

Fourth World nations that are successful (many have failed and disappeared over time) practice the simple maxim “use and benefit from the life-giving fruits of the earth but chose not to use more than can be naturally reproduced.” The understanding is that a successful people survives if it worships Earth—Mother Earth—through the practice of a people’s “culture”—the word that connotes: cult=worship and ure=Earth. This simple idea ensured the longevity of unnumbered nations over thousands of years—some are the oldest living human societies in the modern world. The balanced and intimate relationship between Fourth World societies and the earth’s living abundance not only sustained nations over great expanses of time, but the failure of some nations to practice the balance all too frequently resulted in their collapse—their disintegration. Their experiences must inform complex societies today that actively engage in unsustainable development. Successful nations are responsible for ensuring what is now popularly referred to as “biodiversity” throughout the world—the primary living support system for the entire world.

Understanding the reciprocal relationship between Fourth World nations and the Earth forces us all to recognize that the continuing biocultural existence of Fourth World nations is essential to the sustainability of biodiversity and together they are responsible for sustaining life on this planet. They are inexorably bound together. That Fourth World nations occupy the most biodiverse territories in the world also causes States, corporations (business-



es), religions, and organized criminal enterprises in search of wealth and power to confiscate lands and resources and too frequently violently attack Fourth World nations. At the same time non-governmental organizations seeking to protect the environment from destruction tend to ignore the role that Fourth World nations play in the process of sustaining biodiversity.

In this volume I discuss the challenges faced by Fourth World nations emphasizing the antagonistic relationship between states and Fourth World nations. While the conflicts between states and nations are often violent and too frequently drawn out over decades Fourth World nations must contend with the idea of the state that seeks to dominate and universalize as oppose to coexist and particularize. This basic struggle between dominance and coexistence, universalization and particularization forms the contours of the Biodiversity Wars; and the successful mediation of the clashes must lead to coexistence under new international rules of conduct with effective enforcement mechanisms or the evidence now demonstrates the collapse of human societies (biocultural diversity) will also mean the collapse of biodiversity.

As I see it, this is not necessarily a battle to the death though this is possible; it is possible to establish “an equilibrium of coexistence.” But if nations and states cannot establish equilibrium neither the state nor the nations will survive into the next century. I offer a discussion of the magnitude of the problem and the potential approaches for reaching the balance.