



**VIDS**

**Vereniging van Inheemse Dorpshoofden in Suriname**

Verl. Gemenelandsweg 18d; Paramaribo, Suriname – Tel.: +597 520130 | 520131 – Email [infovids@vids.sr](mailto:infovids@vids.sr)

## **Resolutions Eighth VIDS Conference**

*Washabo/Section/Apoera, West-Suriname*

*27 – 29 August 2022*

The village leaders of the Indigenous villages of the whole of Suriname met during the Eighth Conference of the Association of Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname (VIDS), which was held from 27 to 29 August 2022 in Washabo, West Suriname, with the full participation of basjas [village board members], representatives of village women's organizations and representatives of village youth organizations, in the presence of several other invitees and interested parties.

The Conference adopted the following decisions:

### **I. 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary VIDS**

During the conference, the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Association of Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname (VIDS) was commemorated, and an overall evaluation was made of its functioning. We conclude that VIDS has experienced steady growth, and now occupies an indispensable place being the highest organ of the Traditional Authority of all Indigenous Peoples in Suriname, and as an expression of our right to self-determination and self-government.

The conference expresses its great gratitude to the founders of VIDS in 1992, the former presidents and boards of VIDS, as well as to other people from the very beginning who have been working on the work of VIDS ever since and until now.

The Conference emphasizes that VIDS has great responsibilities as the representative of the Indigenous peoples of Suriname and interlocutor of the government of the Republic of Suriname, the government in general, and national and international organizations on matters concerning the rights and interests of the Indigenous Peoples in Suriname. VIDS is our representative and our traditional authority body, not as a Western organization or NGO but as a traditional institution rooted in the collectivity of all Indigenous peoples of Suriname.

### **II. Approval Report Board VIDS and Bureau VIDS**

We have taken note with approval of the substantive and financial report given by the outgoing board of VIDS and of Bureau VIDS on the past period since the last VIDS Conference in 2017 in Redi Doti, Para. The following recommendations are given for the coming term of office:

- a. Strengthening communication and information exchange with the Indigenous community in Suriname in general and with the villages in particular, as well as to the outside world.
- b. Greater visibility of VIDS in the villages, including through regular visits to the villages.

- c. Providing periodic reports to the villages on the implementation of the policy and work plan of VIDS and on the results that have been achieved.
- d. Greater involvement of young people in the work of VIDS.

### III. Policy Programme and Results Areas

The policy of VIDS is determined by the collectivity. The Eighth VIDS Conference approved the following themes for the policy programme of VIDS for the period 2022 – 2027, namely:

- 1. Rights of Indigenous peoples, in particular land rights, Traditional Authorities, execution Kaliña & Lokono (K&L) judgment and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)
- 2. Capacity strengthening [traditional governance], organization and management
- 3. Climate change, renewable energy, biodiversity, and other environmental issues
- 4. Autonomous sustainable community development, health care, education and culture
- 5. Inclusiveness, policy advocacy, SDGs, and social participation.

The Conference takes the following policy decisions within these themes:

#### III.1. Legal recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights

- a. We endorse and reiterate our demand for the immediate and full legal recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Suriname, including:
  - the legal recognition of our right to self-determination as Indigenous peoples;
  - the constitutional recognition of Indigenous Peoples and other amendments to the Constitution to bring it into line with the highest international standards of Indigenous peoples' rights;
  - the legal recognition of our collective land rights to our traditional territories as they have been and/or will be mapped by ourselves;
  - the legal recognition of our Traditional Authorities;
  - the legal recognition of our right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).
- b. At the same time, we demand the immediate and full implementation of the Kaliña and Lokono judgment handed down by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on November 25, 2015. The deadlines for implementation have been exceeded with more than 3 years, which we find unacceptable for a self-respecting State with the rule of law. The Indigenous peoples of Suriname call on the National Assembly to promptly consider and adopt legislation on our Collective Rights, based on formulations arising from previous consultations with our Traditional Authority, clearly stating that we will accept **nothing less than the highest international standards** on the rights of Indigenous peoples.
- c. We continue to follow the path of dialogue but at the same time indicate that if the legislation and the judgment are not adopted respectively not implemented by 25 May 2023, **according to the highest international standards**, we will not hesitate to pursue other national and international avenues to achieve our legitimate rights and demands and to protect our territories, always within existing legal frameworks -- it can no longer be accepted, the discrimination, legal uncertainty and structural disadvantage of our children,

our women, our villages. The Eighth VIDS Conference also emphasizes that if this legislation is not yet in place and the K&L verdict has not yet been fully implemented, no political party will be allowed into our Indigenous villages with false and empty promises that they are going to settle it.

- d. The Conference reiterates that Indigenous territories **do not** belong to the domain land of the State. We are totally opposed to the draft Land Conversion Act and also to individual land applications or concessions for any extractive industry within our Indigenous territories. Any act by the government to decide over, or cause damage to Indigenous territories is contrary to the judgments against the State of Suriname and to international human rights standards concerning the rights of Indigenous peoples, and will also be understood and contested as such. Any action already committed in this respect should be immediately nullified or revoked. Our ancestral Indigenous territories have been bequeathed [to us] by our ancestors as a gift from the Highest, to be preserved by us for our posterity.
- e. The Conference emphasizes that the demarcation maps produced by, and under the direction of, the Indigenous villages ourselves meet international standards for demarcation and that these maps should be the basis for the legal determination of our Indigenous territories;
- f. These demarcation maps will be formally presented to the relevant public authorities for the umpteenth time, in order for them to take due account of the fact that these areas cannot be decided on without our FPIC.
- g. The regional FPIC protocols for the West, Wayambo, Para and East Suriname regions are approved. Work will continue on the draft FPIC protocol of the Trio region, and the already existing Engagement Protocol of the Wayana is welcomed.
- h. We determinedly and intensively continue to pursue greater awareness on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the forging of partnerships at national and international level.

### **III.2. Capacity building, organization and management**

Our traditional Indigenous governance systems will be further strengthened, as part of our right to self-determination and self-government, and as a condition for our survival as Indigenous Peoples. The Conference concludes that intensive work will be done to strengthen leadership and governance processes in the villages, to establish village regulations and procedures for governance and succession. In this context, we further decide:

- a. We will continuously work on strengthening the capacity of our village authorities, in particular for new village boards.
- b. Our traditional authorities are preferably appointed according to the traditional system of appointment by the collectivity, and not through the Western individual system of elections that too often results in internal divisions.
- c. Agreements will be made with the government about a maximum period of three months for the issuing of the resolutions for traditional authorities.
- d. External interference in village governance matters, or undermining our Traditional Authorities, for example by politics, is resolutely rejected.
- e. Village boards should periodically conduct evaluations of their performance with their village community.

- f. VIDS in general and village leaders in particular should provide opportunities for Indigenous youth and women to become actively involved in the work of VIDS.
- g. Intensive work will be done to set up a VIDS GIS database of all Indigenous villages, and in the case of the Wayana, further expand the existing GIS database.
- h. VIDS and in particular Bureau VIDS, will work intensively on institutional strengthening of the organization, including in the areas of financial and organizational management, accountability and periodic reporting to the villages, based on the policy program and the results to be achieved.
- i. On the basis of the decisions of the Eighth Conference, an extensive training programme for Indigenous village authorities, women and youth will be drawn up, and the corresponding funding will be sought.

### **III.3. Climate change, renewable energy, biodiversity and other environmental issues**

The Conference has looked at current developments in the field of climate change and the measures being taken against it, as well as in the field of renewable energy. We as Indigenous peoples are hardest hit by climate change in many ways, for example by the unpredictability of seasons, floods, erosion, drought, forest fires and much more. At the same time, the territories of Indigenous peoples worldwide have remained the best protected thanks to our sustainable way of life in harmony with, and respect for, nature.

The Conference decided to:

- a. Conduct regional studies on the impacts of climate change, food security and food sovereignty, in order to identify adequate options for climate crisis mitigation and adaptation and for sustainable renewable energy and alternative farming methods and/or products that are appropriate for our communities.
- b. Demand inclusiveness, effective participation in decision-taking and FPIC in any policy, decision and/or project, including carbon projects, carbon storage measurements or commercialization, that in any way affect, or relate to, our ancestral forests and waters, in accordance with our internationally recognized rights as Indigenous peoples.
- c. Promote the sustainable conservation and enjoyment of our forests, including through the use of ethnobotanical and non-timber forest products and through using, preserving and protecting our ancestral, collective traditional knowledge.
- d. Work on other environmental aspects that have a critical impact on our communities, such as ensuring clean drinking water, combating environmental pollution from mercury and plastic, among other things, and waste separation.
- e. Work to control and monitor our areas, particularly with regard to illegal and excessive logging and mining.
- f. [Demand] Inclusiveness, effective participation in decision-making on policies and measures in the context of disaster management and emergency responses.
- g. Demand special attention to the inclusion of Indigenous women and youth in all policy processes and programmes that affect our communities.

### **III.4. Autonomous sustainable community development, health care, education and culture**

In the context of autonomous sustainable community development, the Conference identified the following priorities for the period ahead:

- a. Supporting self-made regional or village plans for the future, from our own Indigenous development perspective
- b. Improvement and guaranteeing of sustainable energy supply
- c. Improvement and guaranteeing of telecommunications and transport facilities
- d. Identifying markets and improving economic networks
- e. Stimulating own ventures, including in the fields of agriculture, tourism and handcraft
- f. Improving and guaranteeing high-quality healthcare in Indigenous villages
- g. Improving and guaranteeing mainstream education in Indigenous villages, including the encouraging and enabling of distance learning
- h. Stimulating cultural preservation, cultural transfer and language teaching
- i. Stimulating multilingual education, including the incorporation of our own knowledge systems and practices into mainstream education
- j. Stimulating the strengthening of Indigenous cadres
- k. Closer engagement in policy processes and effective cooperation with government, ministries, utility companies, parastatal and non-governmental organizations in the field of sustainable human development and public services
- l. Strongly stimulating own initiative for self-efficacy and realizing the necessary preconditions for local and other development goals of the Indigenous communities in Suriname.

### **III.5. Inclusiveness, policy advocacy, SDGs and social participation**

The Conference strongly emphasizes the role and the rights and inclusiveness that must exist of Indigenous peoples, in particular Indigenous women, young people and older people, in formulating and implementing national and regional policies.

We support and will work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the national and international community and the United Nations, and will work on identifying and formulating the necessary indicators for inclusiveness, realizing the SDGs and monitoring the achievement of results.

The Conference also approved the recommendations and actions discussed in working groups on these main themes.

## **IV. New VIDS board**

The profile description for board members of VIDS is confirmed with additions as discussed in the Eighth Conference.

By consensus, the following persons have been appointed as members of the VIDS board, while within the new board the board positions are divided among themselves as follows:

Function	Name	Village	Region
Chairperson	Muriel Fernandes	Cassipora	Para/Wanica/Commewijne
Vice-chair	Selowin Alamijawari	Langamankondre Galibi	East
Secretary	Angelique Palmtak	Grankreek	Wayambo/Saramacca
Treasurer	Margriet Biswane	Alfonsdorp	East
Member	Moshesi Sanaupe	Tepu	South/Trio
Member	Mennio Moeshe	Kwamalasangutu	South/Trio
Member	Ipomadi Pelenapin	Kawemhakan	South/Wayana
Member	Patrick Mandé	Witsanti	Para/Wanica/Commewijne
Member	Carlo Lewis	Apoera	West/Nickerie

## V. Thanks to host villages, donors and contributing villages

The Indigenous village leaders of Suriname met during the Eighth Conference of the Association of Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname (VIDS) from 27 – 29 August 2022 in Washabo/Section/Apoera with full participation of basjas, representatives of women's organizations and representatives of youth organizations, in the presence of several other guests and interested parties.

The participants of the Eighth VIDS Conference hereby express their great appreciation and gratitude for the hospitality of the village leaders of West Suriname, the other village authorities and the people of the host villages Washabo, Section and Apoera, and for their commitment to making the conference a success. Special thanks go to the village leaders Carlo Lewis, Ferdinand Simmonds and Sergio Srisria, the women and men of the kitchen, the many other workers, the soundman and guard of the community hall, the local guesthouses and transporters who have made their services and facilities available, all Indigenous villages that have made their own contribution to food and transport, the donors Nia Tero, UNDP and the government authorities who have provided financial or other support, and all the others who made this conference possible and made our stay in Washabo, Section and Apoera so productive and unforgettable.

**These resolutions were discussed and adopted unanimously at the plenary session of the Eighth VIDS Conference, on Monday 29 August 2022.**