



UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

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AMAZONIAN FLYING RIVERS:
SECURING THE WORLD'S HYDROLOGICAL PUMP STEERED BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

[March 23, 2023, 18:30, UN HQ, Room 5, NYC]

Organized by:

- - Iepé - Instituto de Pesquisa e Formação Indígena
- - Fundación Gaia Amazonas
- - Ecociencia
- - Nature and Culture International Ecuador
- - Nature and Culture International Peru
- - Nature and Culture International
- - SPDA
- - Instituto del Bien Común
- - Wataniba

Background on the event (one paragraph)

The world is in a turning point due to the climate crisis and the fragile state of biodiversity. Scientists have stated that "biodiversity is in decline globally at unprecedented levels in human history, implying subsequent impacts on people's well-being" (IPBES, 2018). Tropical rainforests like the Amazon have been identified as [key regions](#) for the global water cycle. For this reason, the [North Amazon Alliance](#) brings together seven organizations from five countries in the region north of the Amazon River, who are aligned in their principles of working hand in hand with indigenous peoples around the commitment to protect the Amazon's integrity by safeguarding its ecosystem and sociocultural connectivity. Members share the sense of urgency to protect the [Amazon's flying rivers](#), a climatological phenomenon which is key for planetary wellbeing that determines the rain patterns in regions as distant as the south of Argentina and the great plains in the USA, the American "cereal production belts", fundamental for food security at a continental level. It has been widely documented that indigenous territories have the lowest deforestation rates in contrast with the deforestation that takes place where indigenous territories do not have secured rights to land, and therefore forests are vulnerable to colonization (Carrizosa 2016). The areas recognized under these collective territories hold up to 98% of forest cover due to indigenous peoples interventions which enhance natural relations and cycles. This side event brings voices of key stakeholders in the region together, indigenous and civil society, in order to

highlight the interconnection between forests and water, and the importance of the Amazon to secure large-scale water cycles.

Water Action Agenda (one paragraph, if possible, please include the link to your commitment in the [Water Action Agenda database](#))

We are united by the vision that the forests, rivers and cultures in the Amazon are connected to enhance planetary wellbeing. We seek cultural, social, and ecological connectivity to safeguard the integrity of the Amazon, and its relationship with the Andes and the Atlantic to ensure the Andes-Amazon-Atlantic system's role in regulating the global climate and the water cycle, among other life support systems that guarantee planetary wellbeing and resilience. Our starting point are the territorial strategies that we accompany, with the commitment to value and position the indigenous knowledge systems on which these are based, approaching these from an intercultural approach. We accompany the definition and implementation of community management self-defined planning tools. The challenge: the integrity of the largest and best preserved tropical forest in the world is at risk. For this reason, our mission is to protect the great Amazon's flying river, essential to maintain life on the planet. For this reason, it is urgent to articulate joint actions with diverse stakeholders in order to achieve the goal aimed by the North Amazon Alliance: TO SAFEGUARD ECOSYSTEM AND SOCIOCULTURAL CONNECTIVITY IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF AMAZON.

Link: <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/promote-protection-amazonian-flying-rivers-and-contribute-saveguard-ecosystem-and>

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- The importance of the Amazon for the global water agenda and for regulating water cycles at large scales, highlighting the intersection between water and forests.
- How Amazonian Flying Rivers work: the Amazon forest creates its own clouds by absorbing and releasing vapor through its leaves, and this process done over and over again by such a dense canopy, pushes this humidity and the clouds from East to West, providing rain in the Andes, and regulate rain patterns at a continental level.
- How territorial indigenous peoples governance strategies and contribute to maintaining the health of the forest, and therefore securing the Amazonian Flying River
- How the Jaguars of Yurupari Macroterritory Cultural Affinity constitutes a reference case of a collective governance process, bringing together four indigenous territories associated by a shared cultural affinity, which enables a joint strategy to secure land and self-determination rights as a means to forest and biodiversity protection, offering direct contributions to the regulation of water cycles in the Amazon.
- How watershed management in the Southern Ecuadorian Andes at a local and regional scale (Paltas Municipality case study), revived an ancient indigenous practice of maintaining small check dams and infiltration ponds across the landscape to significantly increase the municipality's water supply, linking the implications of the Amazon in the Andean rain patterns and evidence the importance of maintaining the Amazonian flyingriver for the dry high-mountain regions.
- Advocacy strategies in Peru to inform national water policies through joint civil society organizations and social movements actions, highlighting the role of the Amazon region in order to guarantee water supply in the Andes mountains.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Conferences like these should have more space for solutions to avoiding water scarcity, like the one proposed in the side event.

- To secure the effective participation of indigenous peoples in these discussions, in a horizontal way taking into account that their territories safeguard and manage key water and forest ecosystems
- Identify territorial reference cases defined as high-impact local strategies, with the potential to be modeled, to inspire relevant solutions in strategic territories for ecosystem and socio-cultural connectivity.
- The territorial strategies accompanied by the members of ANA are articulated among each other and through regional knowledge management and regional advocacy strategies. By this, it is possible to consolidate connectivity in strategic territories for the protection of the integrity of the Amazon, while enhancing the impact of local territorial strategies, articulating actions based on diverse approaches and in multi-stakeholder coordination instances, among others.
- Promote the Amazon as a key region for the planet, and position local strategies implemented by the indigenous peoples to protect the forest's integrity, in political agendas that are of relevance for the region, through the implementation of escalated advocacy strategies, based on indigenous peoples and local communities' knowledge, governance and management systems.