**Category: Obligations Relating to Those in Vulnerable Situations**

**Sub-Category: Indigenous Peoples**

Name of Practice: Whakatane Assessments, Rights-Based Assessments of Protected Areas

Implementing Actors: International Organisation: IUCN secretariat, IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP); Civil Society Organisation: Forest Peoples Programme, indigenous peoples’ organisations (IPOs).

Location: Kenya, Thailand, Congo (initial pilots)

Key Words: Human Rights-Based Assessments, Vulnerable; Indigenous, Conservation, Environmental Human Rights Defenders, Protected Areas

Description:Whakatane Assessments are part of a larger programme called the Whakatane Mechanism, which is implemented by the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP), the Forest Peoples Programme, and other indigenous peoples’ organisations (IPOs). According to IUCN, the Whakatane Mechanism “is a process to assess, address and redress situations, primarily in protected areas, where indigenous peoples consider themselves to be negatively affected by a protected area designation or management practices.”

The main working method under the Mechanism is the use of “Whakatane Assessments,” which have been piloted in Kenya, Congo and Thailand. According to the Whakatane Mechanism website, the “structure of these pilot Assessments was similar: a first roundtable that brought together the different institutions involved in the protected area to explain the concept of the Whakatane Mechanism and plan ahead. This was followed by a scoping study of several days in the protected area to meet with communities and local officials. A second roundtable followed to present and agree on the findings and recommendations of the Assessment.” For example, the assessment in Kenya found that “the Ogiek [community] have a positive relationship with their natural environment and indicated that community structures, presence and livelihood practices contribute to protecting the forest, moorland and fauna.” It concluded that “there is therefore an opportunity for decision-makers of the County Council to reverse their earlier attempts to evict the Ogiek, and to instead support their continued conservation of their lands.” In Kenya, the FPP and IUCN put together a programme of work – validated by all participants at the second roundtable - to work on establishing clear evidence based co-management structures that can ensure that Ogiek management of their land is respected.

Further Information: The main website for the Mechanism: <http://whakatane-mechanism.org>; IUCN’s progress report for the Mechanism: <http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/ceesp/?9764/Progress-Report-of-the-Whakatane-Mechanism>.