

SER2023 Urges Sustained, Meaningful Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Ecological Restoration

Traditional Ecological Knowledge and scientific innovation together drive positive outcomes for people and nature

DARWIN, NT, AUSTRALIA, September 27, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- SER2023, the 10th World Conference on Ecological Restoration, was inaugurated this morning by Dr. Richard Fejo "Uncle Richie", a Larrakia Elder from Darwin who has dedicated his life to advocating for and supporting aboriginal people in the Northern Territories. Uncle Richie's Welcome to Country set the stage for the largest global meeting of restoration experts, calling on delegates to listen and learn from each other as they gather to celebrate and restore the connection between people and nature.



Kia Dowell giving her plenary speech at the 10th World Conference on Ecological Restoration

The event's opening plenary session explored this connection, emphasizing the importance for institutions to collaborate with local Indigenous peoples and knowledge in restoration from the start. Kia Dowell, a Gija woman from Warmun Community in Western Australia and Chair of Gelganyem Limited, works to support the empowerment and inclusion of Traditional Owners in the rehabilitation of the Argyle Diamond Mine. Supported by the Board of Traditional Owners and guided by Elders, her leadership has helped create a model that ensures Traditional Owners' social, cultural, economic and caring for country needs are being met.

"There have been many lessons learned from our work at Argyle, but among the most important is the power of partnerships to bring about change," said Ms. Dowell. "But this is not easy work. It is not just an environmental issue, it has deep cultural importance. The Traditional Owners have an ancient spiritual connection with the land. Its return to their stewardship for restoration will heal the former mine site using Traditional Ecological Knowledge passed down through generations, and reclaim our people's connection with this land for future generations."

Alongside her, Lucy Mulenkei, a Masaai from Kenya, Executive Director of Indigenous Information Network and Advisory Board member for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, emphasized the role played by Indigenous women who are at the forefront of the fight to restore their lands, especially as they are often the most impacted by land and ecosystem degradation.

“Communication and engagement with everyone - women, children, youth, elders - in indigenous communities is essential for successful restoration. Inclusion is how we drive action,” said Ms. Mulenkei. “Importantly, restoration can only be considered successful if it results in outcomes that are positive for nature in all its forms, including increasing biodiversity, and for people, driving social benefits for local communities. Because these go hand in hand.”



Lucy Mulenkei giving her plenary speech at SER2023

The need to draw on the experience of diverse stakeholders and integrate many different types of knowledge - including Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) alongside scientific knowledge - is core to Principles 1 and 2 of the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) [International Principles and Standards](#) for the Practice of Ecological Restoration, a global framework to guide implementation and measure outcomes of restoration projects.

The sold-out conference has brought together over 1,000 participants from 80 countries, demonstrating the growing momentum of the restoration movement. This exceptional attendance by delegates from around the world reflects an increasing desire to share knowledge and innovations in support of the UN Decade’s ambitions to restore [1 billion hectares](#) of degraded lands worldwide, with similar commitments encouraged for marine and coastal areas.

“SER2023 has provided the UN Decade with a unique platform for engagement with academics, scientists, and practitioners at the forefront of ecosystem restoration,” said Natalia Alekseeva, Coordinator for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, UN Environment Programme (UNEP). “SER is one of the Global Partners of the Decade and by convening our Advisory Board at the conference, we have been able to draw first-hand from the expertise of this global community.”

Over the next four days, 750 symposia, talks, posters, workshops, field trips, and training sessions will explore restoration topics across all continents, ecosystems, and scales guided by SER's International Principles and Standards. Participants are presenting and discussing indigenous and local restoration knowledge, field-based restoration innovations, global databases, innovative eco-technologies, community projects, inspirational approaches, and much more.

Plenary sessions from the conference will be live-streamed each day [via this link](#) and are available for replay upon request.

For more information and the full conference program, please visit www.ser2023.org

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About the Society for Ecological Restoration

The Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) advances the science, practice and policy of ecological restoration to sustain biodiversity, improve resilience in a changing climate, and re-establish an ecologically healthy relationship between nature and culture. An international non-profit organization with over 5,000 members in more than 110 countries, we actively promote participatory, knowledge-based approaches to restoration. Learn more about our work at www.ser.org.

About the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, led by the United Nations Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its partners, covers terrestrial as well as coastal and marine ecosystems. As a global call to action, it will draw together political support, scientific research and financial muscle to massively scale up restoration. Find out how you can contribute to the UN Decade. Follow [#GenerationRestoration](#).

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