

**For Immediate Release**

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## **International Climate Justice Convening to Address Displacement of Indigenous Communities**

*Three-day conference will see more than 60 community leaders and advocates come together to develop a plan to address climate injustice facing Indigenous communities*

**GIRDWOOD, AK**—More than 60 community leaders and advocates from across the world will gather in Girdwood, Alaska for a three-day conference to discuss the devastating impacts of climate change and agree upon a shared advocacy platform to address climate-forced displacement.

“The Convening brings together some of the first communities, who have done the least to contribute to our climate crisis and are losing the place they call home because of our collective failure to reduce greenhouse gases,” said Robin Bronen, executive director of the Alaska Institute for Justice, one of 13 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attending the **First People’s Convening on Climate-Forced Displacement** from October 2-4 in Girdwood. “The Convening offers a tremendous opportunity for them to share their wisdom, strength, and courage and develop principles to guide our response for the millions who will be faced with this same existential threat.”

The Alaska contingent will represent 16 Alaska Native tribes. Others include civil society and community representatives from Bangladesh, several Pacific Island countries, and the states of Louisiana and Washington. Convening participants—most, if not all, of whom have experienced the impacts of climate change—will share experiences, build relationships, and develop strategies, including a shared declaration of principles that will guide future advocacy work.

**Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons for the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner**, is tentatively scheduled to participate in a special Skype session with attendees to discuss the impacts of climate-forced displacement.

Fenton Lutunatabua, Pacific regional coordinator for 350.org, a grassroots environmental advocacy organization in the Pacific Islands, will attend the convening with a contingent of seven Pacific island countries. He said that convenings like this are a prime opportunity to build a strong coalition to attack a global problem.

“Climate change really knows no bounds,” he said. “It continues to be a crisis that threatens the survival of Pacific Islands and the rest of the world. It’s important for everyone to get involved and see themselves as part of the solution. Gatherings like this, that bring together community leaders from around the world, not only reflect the diversity of this movement of people working towards solutions, but the true power of people coming together.”

“We have learned that by 2050, climate change will force the displacement of up to 200 million people. *Two hundred million people,*” said Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) CEO and President Mary Katherine Morn. “Our hope in joining together with partners for this convening is to build relationships, identify common needs and goals, and provide a sacred and shared space where people who are most impacted by climate change will have the agency to determine their futures.”

Climate change impacts fall into two broad categories: rapid events (tornadoes, hurricanes, and floods) and slow-onset events (melting permafrost, erosion, and rising sea levels). Since 2008, more than 25 million people have been displaced annually due to rapid climate change events; data on slow-onset events are much harder to quantify.

Compounding the climate change threat is the lack of funding and governance frameworks to address relocation efforts or the costs associated with the loss and damage communities experience. An equally important concern is the marginalization of the voices of the communities most impacted, the majority of whom are Indigenous peoples.

To learn more about climate change, climate-forced displacement, and the convening, visit [www.uusc.org/climateconvening](http://www.uusc.org/climateconvening).

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*Throughout the world, UUSC and our partners advance human rights, dismantle systems of oppression, and uplift the inherent worth and dignity of all people through grassroots partnerships, leadership education, and advocacy.*