



April 17, 2018

Title: Healing and Bears Ears National Monument by the United States

Statement to the United Nations by Angelo Baca, Cultural Resources Coordinator, Utah Diné Bikéyah

Dear Madame Chair,

My name is Angelo Baca and I am from the Navajo and Hopi Nations. I serve as the Cultural Resources Coordinator for Utah Diné Bikéyah, a non-profit, with a ten-person, all Indigenous Board working at the local level with Native community members to protect our traditional culture and lands.

Today, the Bears Ears National Monument is at the center of a critical discussion around Indigenous rights and cultural access to sacred sites and (traditional) uses in this country. Tribes in the United States are losing access to critical cultural landscapes. Bears Ears National Monument was reduced in violation of our human rights, an action that if stands, sends the signal that any land protection of indigenous peoples can also be reduced.

Five federally recognized tribes the Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, Ute Mountain Ute, Uintah and Ouray Ute tribal nations worked for years to protect the shared ancestral lands we depend upon for our cultural and spiritual survival. The Trump admin removed protections across more than 445,000 hectares (or 1.1 million acres) of our ancestral lands, containing more than 100,000 historic archaeological and sacred sites, significant to more than a dozen Tribes in the Southwestern U.S.

On January 30, 2018, UN Special Rapporteur Tauli-Corpuz issued a statement about Bears Ears saying, “The decision to reduce the area included in the national monument by 85 percent is a huge setback for the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples. It exposes thousands of acres of sacred lands and archaeological sites to the threats of desecration, contamination and permanent destruction.”

Article 11 of UNDRIP, asserts that “Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, ...etc.” This goal was realized at Bears Ears by local Indigenous people and their parent Tribes who requested the National Monument status to preserve Native cultures and sacred lands.

Despite our success in 2016, the position of the 5 Tribes has been ignored by the United States government when they removed protections and re-opened the region to mineral leasing. Natural resource extraction, such as uranium mining, has negatively impacted our Indigenous communities’ health and lives. At its core, this movement is about healing for indigenous people, the land, and all our human and non-human relatives.

We ask representatives from across the globe to stand in solidarity with the 5 Tribes of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition and our allies to promote our vision of healing. We request that the United States government honor and respect Tribes by restoring the original Bears Ears National Monument designation and the original co-management structure which invites the sharing of our Native wisdom and stewardship practices on these lands.

We ask the international community to send letters of support asking that Tribes to be treated as equals through respectful government to government engagement by the United States. We seek your help in building strong alliances and partnerships with the international community, tribal leaders, elders, traditional knowledge holders and native non-profit organizations to help Utah Diné Bikéyah and Indigenous communities restore protections and promote healing for all.

We invite the U.N. Special Rapporteur, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz to attend the Bears Ears Summer Gathering on July 20-22nd to celebrate the indigenous cultures that emerged from the Bears Ears landscape. The Salt Lake Tribune featured the [creation stories of the Tribes of Bears Ears in today’s newspaper](#).