Thank you Chair, I am a member of the local communities’ network from Zimbabwe representing the Chibememe Earth Healing Association. I’m speaking on behalf of those local communities. I’m addressing agenda Item 10 on protected areas and ecosystem restoration.

We welcome document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/20/12 protected areas and ecosystem restoration and thanks the Secretariat for preparing the document.

We recognize that ecosystem restoration contributes to the achievement of Aichi Targets and in particular the achievement of Aichi Target 11 on protected areas. Local Communities have for millennia lived with nature; conserving it through using traditional knowledge (TK) and customary laws. It is our belief that any efforts to restore nature through mechanisms such as protected areas should respect and recognize TK, community protocols and local customary institutions. There is need to respect and recognise Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities since they are the custodians of territories and ecosystems.

We firmly believe that the land and biodiversity that needs to be protected, conserved and restored do not exist in a vacuum. Most of these are located in lands and territories of Indigenous Peoples and Local communities. It is with this in mind that we call for recognition of customary tenure, ownership and management of protected areas instead of adopting an expansion approach of PAs into indigenous peoples’ and local communities’ lands, territories and waters. We believe expanding PAs without safeguarding the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities over their lands, territories and waters is not in keeping within the spirit of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the CBD’s Articles 10(c) and 8(j).

Recommendations:

In the proposed recommendation to COP13, we recognise that there is a gap in that there are no direct recommendations that address Indigenous peoples and local communities’ concerns. Therefore we recommend the following new text:

3(bis) – Encourages Parties to strengthen legal, policy, technical and other forms of recognition and support for Indigenous peoples and local communities’ customary lands and resource management, conservation and restoration efforts.

5(bis) – Request the Parties, secretariat and relevant organisations to support community based initiatives on ecosystem restoration in the context of the CBD’s Plan of Action on Customary Sustainable Use.

7(bis) – Request the Parties to ensure that Equitable protected area governance and management systems are put in place (including community conserved areas and joint management).

We welcome the idea of a short-term action plan on ecosystem restoration and the guideline for integrating biodiversity into ecosystem as described in the Annex of the document. However, we emphasise following points:
1. the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in key elements of the Action Plan;

2. Incorporation of customary governance and the principle of subsidiarity and devolution of power in Section B of the Guidelines.

3. Respect and build on customary rules and institutions in Section B of the Guidelines.

4. Recognise spiritual and cultural values in accounting processes of natural habitats.

We will submit the substantive details on the Annex in writing to the Secretariat.

I thank you.

I thank you.