



# Economic and Social Council

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## Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Twenty-third session

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### Draft report

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## Chapter I Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention

### B. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

#### Recommendations of the Permanent Forum

##### Dialogues: regional dialogues (item 5 (e))

1. The Permanent Forum held seven regional dialogues: Africa; the Arctic; Asia; Central and South America and the Caribbean; Central and Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia; North America; and the Pacific. The aim was to engage the participants in deeper dialogue on relevant issues and on challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples in the various regions.

##### Africa

2. The Permanent Forum welcomed the progress made by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana and Namibia in advancing the rights of Indigenous Peoples' in those countries.

3. The lack of recognition of Indigenous Peoples violates their right to self-determination. Their legal recognition should be aligned with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the report of the Working Group of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.<sup>1</sup> The Permanent Forum invites African Governments to join groups of friends of Indigenous Peoples.

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<sup>1</sup> See [https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications/African\\_Commission\\_book.pdf](https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications/African_Commission_book.pdf).



4. The Permanent Forum notes that the concern expressed elsewhere in the present report about the extraction of critical minerals applies equally to Indigenous Peoples in Africa. The Forum also underscores the importance of fully integrating Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems into conservation initiatives.
5. The dialogue highlighted the challenges Indigenous Peoples from Africa face in participating in United Nations meetings, including logistical obstacles in obtaining visas and a lack of financial resources. The Permanent Forum invites African States to contribute to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples and called for common efforts to facilitate visa processes in order to ensure the participation of African Indigenous Peoples, including women and youth.
6. The Permanent Forum is concerned about the impacts of climate change in the Sahel and Great Lakes regions, which have triggered armed conflicts and displacement, and heightened the vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples. The Forum calls for regional climate action.
7. The Permanent Forum calls upon African States and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to safeguard Indigenous Peoples' languages and to develop culturally appropriate education systems for Indigenous children and youth. The Forum also encourages the development of initiatives to prioritize Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems, especially for women and girls.
8. The Permanent Forum reiterates its call upon African Member States to extend invitations to the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and other mandate holders to conduct country visits to foster transparent and constructive dialogue. The Forum notes the invitations from the Governments of Namibia and the United Republic of Tanzania to the Special Rapporteur to undertake country visits and invites Member States to provide financial support to realize these visits.
9. The Permanent Forum highlights the importance of creating direct and accessible finance for African Indigenous Peoples to implement the three Rio conventions (the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa) and the Sustainable Development Goals, as specified in the study transmitted in the note by the Secretariat entitled "Financing the future: the financial needs of Indigenous Peoples to support their actions for biodiversity, climate and the protection of Mother Earth" ([E/C.19/2024/7](#)).

### **Arctic**

10. In the Arctic region, Indigenous Peoples constitute the majority of the population in certain jurisdictions. It is thus important not to refer to Indigenous Peoples as minorities. There is, however, a disparity in the ways in which the rights of Indigenous Peoples are protected and supported across the region. In certain areas, Indigenous Peoples freely exercise autonomy and self-government, while, in others, these rights are restricted. The Permanent Forum emphasizes the need to focus on the equal participation of Indigenous women in decision-making at all levels.
11. The Permanent Forum urges the Governments of Canada and Denmark and the government of Greenland to follow up on and implement the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur subsequent to his country visits in 2023. The Forum recommends that a human rights-based approach be taken when investigating and addressing the practices and impacts of the so-called intrauterine device campaign affecting Inuit women and adolescents in Greenland.
12. The Permanent Forum urges actions by States in addressing the racism suffered by Inuit peoples, particularly those residing outside Inuit Nunaat. The Forum is

concerned about the high incidence of child removals by child welfare systems legitimized by psychometric tests adapted to non-Inuit peoples.

13. The Permanent Forum is deeply alarmed by the impact of war and armed conflict. The Forum calls upon Member States to impose an immediate moratorium on military conscription among Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

14. The Permanent Forum supports the invitation from the Voluntary Fund for Indigenous youth in the Arctic region to apply for travel grants and for the Indigenous Fellowship Programme.

15. The Permanent Forum encourages the full participation of Indigenous Peoples in environmental assessment processes, including in the context of possible deep-sea mining, as such participation also guarantees the contributions of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge. Given the length of the Arctic coastlines, Indigenous Peoples need to be involved in the monitoring of relevant international shipping routes and their impacts on marine biodiversity and seabeds.

16. The Permanent Forum notes the relevance of the Declaration in the context of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages and recommends the active use of Indigenous languages in the description and names of Indigenous Peoples' homelands and their landscapes and environmental features, as doing so strengthens the sense of belonging and identity, as well as making Indigenous languages visible and omnipresent.

## **Asia**

17. The Asia regional dialogue with Member States in Asia highlighted issues including Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination, in particular the right to lands, territories and resources; the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' identity; the meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making; and, in particular, issues that directly affect their well-being, such as the implementation of the Declaration at the national and international levels with practical outcomes, and actions in addressing climate change and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

18. The Permanent Forum heard that the lack of recognition of Indigenous Peoples by Member States leads to inadequate legal protection and enforcement. For instance, a declaration on environmental rights is currently being drafted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Intergovernmental Commission for Human Rights with no representation from Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples have profound concerns in this regard, and appeal for urgent global support and solidarity to ensure that the rights of Indigenous Peoples are aligned with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

19. Indigenous Peoples noted the ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous media and Indigenous journalists and called for better protection and freedom of expression in the Asia region.

20. The dialogue emphasized the significance of collaborating with the Special Rapporteur on the effects of conflicts on Indigenous Peoples, with a focus on safeguarding the rights of Indigenous Peoples, especially Indigenous women, children and youth, in conflict-affected areas.

21. The Permanent Forum notes that Indigenous Peoples in Asia must not, under any circumstances, be deprived of their fundamental human rights under the Declaration or of direct access to international financial support.

### **Central and South America and the Caribbean**

22. The Permanent Forum calls upon States to revise national public policies and programmes to include a culturally appropriate perspective, in particular in policies and programmes for reproductive health services so that Indigenous women can receive quality health services.

23. Indigenous Peoples of the region pointed out the complex relationship between cultural diversity and democracy. Indigenous Peoples experience limitations to meaningful participation in institutions, and lack decision-making capacity in legislative, executive and judicial bodies, where norms, budgets and public policies are established. This situation has led to a lack of respect for autonomy and self-determination, increased criminalization of Indigenous Peoples' leaders and human rights defenders, a lack of proper consultation to obtain free, prior and informed consent, extractivism and deforestation of Indigenous Peoples' lands and territories.

24. The Permanent Forum heard that, in the name of safeguarding democracy, Governments in the region had implemented exceptional measures that favour repression and criminalization, promote authoritarianism, and suppress protests and demands for self-governance. Indigenous Peoples expressed concern that the results of electoral mechanisms such as referendums were not respected.

25. Indigenous Peoples also pointed out the alarming increase in criminalization, attacks, killings and arbitrary detention of Indigenous Peoples' leaders and human rights defenders, with Indigenous Peoples' justice systems being ignored. The Permanent Forum was informed about hate speech and stigmatizing rhetoric associating Indigenous movements with illegal armed groups, thereby putting the lives of Indigenous Peoples at risk.

### **Central and Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia**

26. Indigenous Peoples' languages in the Russian Federation are endangered and may face extinction. It is imperative to enforce the Declaration in order to preserve these languages. Member States must commit to supporting and funding comprehensive programmes to preserve Indigenous Peoples' languages.

27. The Permanent Forum heard that the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has exacerbated numerous risks for Indigenous Peoples, posing severe existential threats, including forced conscription, massive displacement and attacks targeting their identities. The increase in the criminalization of Indigenous leaders undermines Indigenous Peoples' representative institutions, further jeopardizing their collective rights.

28. Failing to consider the rights of Indigenous Peoples during the transition to green economies could perpetuate historical injustices and lead to further marginalization and discrimination of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the loss of their lands, territories and resources.

29. The Permanent Forum notes that boarding schools in the Russian Federation continue to affect Indigenous Peoples. Cases brought to the attention of the Forum highlighted discrimination in educational settings and the urgent need for equitable education policies. Member States must develop educational programmes tailored to meet the specific needs of Indigenous Peoples, in particular in remote areas. The superficial measures of the Government of the Russian Federation fail to empower Indigenous Peoples.

30. The youth council of the Krasnoyarsk Krai exemplifies engagement in preserving Indigenous Peoples' cultures and languages. Initiatives such as the

“Siberian Argish” youth forum and collaborations with academic institutions highlight the importance of integrating traditional practices with modern technologies to maintain cultural continuity.

31. The Permanent Forum heard that industrial companies and authorities in the Russian Federation promoted certain “authorized bodies of Indigenous Peoples”, which in reality were run by State representatives claiming that only these organizations had the right to negotiate on behalf of Indigenous Peoples. In this regard, the Forum proposes that the Government of the Russian Federation revise the federal law on guarantees of the rights of Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Federation.

32. The Permanent Forum recommends that Member States in the region enhance the protection of Indigenous Peoples through recognition and autonomy, in line with the Declaration, by revising legal and policy frameworks. Governments should rectify the injustices of the colonial past, taking into consideration Indigenous Peoples and their perspectives, in particular those of Indigenous youth, ensuring the participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making.

### **North America**

33. The Permanent Forum welcomes the rich contributions from Indigenous Peoples and Member States during the North America regional dialogue. Indigenous Peoples have many strengths that can contribute positively to a diverse array of areas, such as health, sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

34. The Permanent Forum urges Canada and the United States of America to fund, expand and improve initiatives to end the epidemics that affect Indigenous Peoples, including the alarming rates of HIV, hepatitis C and sexually transmitted infections, especially among women, youth, persons with disabilities, and gender-diverse and two-spirited persons.

35. The rights of Indigenous Peoples to govern lands, to manage resources and to protect lands, territories and ecosystems must be upheld in line with the Declaration. The Permanent Forum is concerned that the bilateral agreements between Canada and the United States to divert or export water from Canada to the United States do not take into consideration Indigenous Peoples’ rights and water needs.

36. The Permanent Forum calls for support to be provided to displaced Mayan and other Indigenous Peoples permanently settled in Canada and the United States so that they are visible to authorities and culturally safe as per the Declaration, while upholding the treaty and trust rights of Indigenous Peoples in North America.

37. With many continuing areas of conflict globally, the Permanent Forum urgently calls upon Member States to focus on ways to achieve peace by utilizing Indigenous Peoples as peacebuilders.

38. The Permanent Forum supports the call for the establishment of an informal elders’ council of the Permanent Forum.

39. The Permanent Forum acknowledges the benefits of evaluating the Forum’s programme of work, operations, participation and tenure in preparation for the twentieth anniversary of the passage of the Declaration.

### **The Pacific**

40. The Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific region span a quarter of the globe. From Hawai’i in the north to the southernmost island of Aotearoa, and from Rapa Nui in the east over to the island of Papua and the shores of the Australian continent. The Permanent Forum heard Indigenous Peoples’ stories about violence, racism,

discrimination, and Indigenous Peoples asserted their right to self-determination under the Declaration.

41. The Permanent Forum is alarmed at the removal of Indigenous children, based on policies and practices not suited to Indigenous Peoples, owing to a culture of discrimination and perceived risk aversion, rather than care and concern. This harmful practice disconnects Indigenous children from their culture, homes and families, with few ramifications for institutional decision makers.

42. The Permanent Forum heard about calls for a campaign in New Zealand to lower the voting age to 16 years of age, as young people have a greater stake in the future, yet very little influence over it.

43. The Permanent Forum is concerned about reprisals against land and environment defenders among Indigenous youth in the Pacific facing the destruction of their sacred sites and ecosystems. The Forum is also concerned about the impacts of extractive industries on Indigenous women and girls, noting the report by the Hawaiian authorities on murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls.

44. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights also urged Pacific Indigenous Peoples to utilize the Voluntary Fund and the Indigenous Fellowship Programme with a view to increasing their representation at United Nations meetings and within the United Nations system.

45. The Permanent Forum invites Member States to consider adopting an International Day of the Arts at the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly in recognition of the arts in all their expressions, including Indigenous arts.

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