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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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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

Interregional, intergenerational and global dialogue on “The rights of Indigenous women” (item 5 (e))

1. The Permanent Forum extends its appreciation to the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia, Lena Estrada Añokazi, for her participation during the twenty-fourth session.
2. The systemic challenges that Indigenous women and girls experience include gender-based violence, marginalization, discrimination and violations of their sexual and reproductive health rights. Indigenous women who advocate for their individual and collective rights also face retaliation. The Permanent Forum heard testimonies asserting that Indigenous women had been imprisoned for organizing peaceful events, even on International Women’s Day.
3. Indigenous women continue to face intersectional forms of discrimination and systemic racism. The Permanent Forum urges States to promote the leadership of Indigenous women in order to address contemporary intersectional discrimination and intergenerational and historical trauma, including for those living outside their ancestral homelands.
4. Despite facing immense adversity, Indigenous women continue to be resilient advocates. They call upon Member States to uphold their international commitments to gender equality and to prioritize the inclusion of Indigenous women in decision-making on development policies and programmes.



Global Indigenous women's rights movement

5. Thirty years ago, Indigenous women delegates at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing made a historic promise: never again would Indigenous women return to advocate at the United Nations alone.
6. The unity of Indigenous women is exemplified through three decades of the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas – a coalition of 26 national Indigenous women's organizations across 23 countries – and 25 years of the International Indigenous Women's Forum. These organizations have played a crucial role in establishing and transforming international platforms, including the Permanent Forum, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
7. Indigenous women have played an invaluable role in shaping global standards, notably through the adoption by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women of its general recommendation No. 39 (2022) on the rights of Indigenous women and girls. The Permanent Forum had called upon the Commission on the Status of Women to prioritize gender equality and the empowerment of Indigenous women and girls as an emerging theme within its multi-year programme of work.
8. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women must guarantee equal access and non-discrimination of Indigenous women in respect of its communications procedure under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. States are encouraged to report annually on their progress in implementing general recommendation No. 39.
9. The Permanent Forum urges the representatives and institutions of Indigenous Peoples to submit candidates, especially Indigenous women, for the Working Group on Business and Human Rights of the Human Rights Council. It also encourages the Forum on Business and Human Rights to establish an ad hoc committee for Indigenous Peoples during the nineteenth cycle of the Human Rights Council. The Forum invites relevant mechanisms of the Human Rights Council to devote attention in their reports to the situation of Indigenous women and children.
10. States must ensure equitable and direct access to funding for Indigenous women's organizations, with a view to enhancing their participation and leadership in decision-making processes.
11. The Permanent Forum acknowledges the commitment by Australia to develop a national action plan to address violence against Indigenous women and children – a milestone championed by Indigenous women. The Forum urges Australia to meet that commitment and provide sufficient resources to implement the plan and calls upon other States to adopt similar strategies.

Indigenous children and the health of Indigenous women

12. Reports of Indigenous children being forcibly removed from their mothers by State agencies evoke painful parallels with discriminatory assimilationist laws of the past. The high rates of child removal by welfare systems are alarming and are often justified through processes that fail to account for the unique cultural contexts of Indigenous Peoples.
13. Forced sterilizations and coerced contraception campaigns are serious violations of reproductive health rights, disproportionately targeting Indigenous women and adolescents worldwide. These practices often stem from systemic racism, colonial ideologies and attempts to control population growth. States must adopt a human rights-based approach to investigate and address these practices. In addition, the

Human Rights Council, at its fifty-ninth session, is urged to establish a commission of inquiry – grounded in free, prior and informed consent and Indigenous-run health systems – to document the global impact of such practices.

14. Recognizing the dangers of mercury and other harmful contaminants in the context of extractive industries, the Permanent Forum urges States to implement comprehensive monitoring and regulation of toxic contaminants on the lands and territories of Indigenous Peoples, including the restoration of sites and water resources that have been affected. It highlights the urgent need to address the severe impact on the health of Indigenous women and children, including neurological damage from prenatal or dietary exposure, and calls for effective interventions and remediation from health and environmental impacts.

Armed conflict and military occupation

15. Indigenous women and children are disproportionately affected by military occupation and armed conflict, which result in, among other things, forced displacement, gender-based violence, trafficking in persons, sexual violence, forced marriage and abduction. These actions are prohibited under international humanitarian and human rights law, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Permanent Forum calls for the United Nations system, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the humanitarian aid sector to ensure that targeted assistance is offered to Indigenous Peoples. The Forum also urges Member States to end impunity and prosecute perpetrators.
