

Statement by H.E. Ms. Paula Narváez President of ECOSOC
23rd session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
United Nations General Assembly
15 April 2024

Mr. President of the General Assembly,

Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

Distinguished representatives of Member States, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations,

Distinguished representatives of the UN system and other intergovernmental organizations,

Distinguished Elders,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the face of numerous global challenges—from health crises to environmental degradation and ongoing conflicts—we find ourselves stalling and, in many cases, reversing progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Indigenous Peoples are custodians of a significant portion of the world's biodiversity. However, their well-being and survival are threatened due to their close relationship, with the environment and its resources. Indigenous women, in particular, are vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, exacerbated by their roles as caregivers, which intimately tie them to natural resources and the environment.

For instance, allow me to cite one example that was widely discussed at the international expert meeting on “Indigenous Peoples and the greening economy” held in January 2024 as agreed by ECOSOC. 85% of lithium reserves are on or near Indigenous Peoples' lands. Yes, lithium leads to lower emissions than fossil fuels, but at what price? The quest to exploit more lands for lithium to promote “green energy” is leading to environmental degradation of water, air and land along with the abuse of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Distinguished delegates,

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues serves as a vital platform where Indigenous Peoples, Member States, and the UN system collaborate to exchange ideas, learn, and propose concrete solutions to enhance the well-being of Indigenous Peoples globally. This work is crucial, and the Economic and Social Council is committed to its seriousness.

We are only 6 years away from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by which time we should have fulfilled our promise to leave no one behind. As the Forum plays a crucial role in advancing the rights of Indigenous Peoples, I invite Member States to use the recommendations of the Permanent Forum to facilitate the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Furthermore, I urge Member States to pay attention not only to the six direct references to Indigenous Peoples in the 2030 Agenda but also to cross-cutting priorities such as equality, non-discrimination, human rights, and the protection of our environment—all integral elements of the 2030 Agenda.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chair of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for taking part in ECOSOC meetings during that past year that demonstrated how the work of the Forum supports the implementation of 2030. The Forum, as a subsidiary body of ECOSOC, will always have a place in our deliberations to raise awareness about Indigenous Peoples issues.

As we commemorate the high-level event marking the 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the outcome document of the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, let us seize the opportunity to continue implementing our commitments as Member States with and for the wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples.

In closing, let us remember that our actions today will shape tomorrow's world. Let us unite in creating a world that respects, protects, and celebrates Indigenous Peoples and their invaluable contributions to our global community.

Thank you.