



THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

24th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Concept Note | Agenda Item 5 (e)

Interregional, intergenerational and global dialogue on the Rights of Indigenous Women

Conference Room 4 | Monday, 21 April 2025

Introduction

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) has decided to shift the regional dialogues agenda to an interregional, intergenerational, and global dialogue format. This year, the UNPFII will dedicate the newly-established dialogue to a topic of enduring importance “the Rights of Indigenous women”, highlighting the serious challenges they face at the intersection of gender, ethnicity and marginalization, which place them in a disadvantaged position in all areas of economic, political and social development, culture, environment, education, health and human rights; and also highlighting that Indigenous women, with their unique knowledge, resilience and leadership, play an essential role in cultural preservation, traditional knowledge maintenance and transmission, sustainable utilization and conservation of biodiversity, climate change adaptation and mitigation and human rights safeguarding, and yet their contributions, leadership, and community resilience are often overlooked.

A dedicated session will empower Indigenous women by increasing their participation in decision-making and advocating for their rights. This session will also align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and reinforce the implementation of international frameworks such as UNDRIP and ILO Convention 169, ensuring Indigenous women’s voices are included in global discussions and actions. Additionally, the adoption of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 39 provides an important tool to advance the implementation of Indigenous women’s rights and should be integrated into this broader discussion.

For the *Interregional, Intergenerational, and Global Dialogue on the Rights of Indigenous Women*, the discussion should focus on progress made, ongoing challenges, and concrete actions needed from Member States, as well as a self-assessment of Indigenous women’s movements and how UN entities can support these demands.





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TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

Possible issues to be discussed:

1. *What progress has been made in securing Indigenous women's rights, and where do we see success stories?*

- Recognition of Indigenous women's rights in international frameworks (e.g., UNDRIP, CEDAW General Recommendation No. 39, ILO 169).
- Progress in political participation and leadership at local, national and international levels.
- Advancements in land, resource, and environmental rights with a gender perspective.
- Good practices in cultural preservation, traditional knowledge protection, and intergenerational transmission.

2. *What are the main obstacles Indigenous women continue to face, and what urgent actions are needed?*

- Prejudice and racism, systemic and state violence including removal of Indigenous children from their mothers and incarceration of Indigenous women.
- Barriers to education, healthcare, social welfare, political participation and economic empowerment and cultural inclusiveness (including barriers for Indigenous girls and elders).
- Impact of climate change and environmental degradation on Indigenous women's livelihoods.
- Lack of access to justice and systemic discrimination within both State legal and Indigenous Peoples' customary law systems.
- Violence against Indigenous women: Missing and murdered Indigenous women, criminalization of defenders, and gender-based violence.

3. *What concrete steps should Member States take to support and protect the rights of Indigenous women?*

- Strengthening legal protections for Indigenous women, including land rights and FPIC.
- Ensuring participation of Indigenous women in decision-making at all levels.
- Implementation of culturally appropriate public policies in health, education, and economic and social inclusion.
- Supporting Indigenous women's leadership in all areas.





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

4. *How can UN entities and their partners collaborate to ensure the effective protection and empowerment of Indigenous women in decision-making, climate action, and sustainable development?*

- Technical assistance to governments in the adoption of laws and policies that protect Indigenous women's rights, ensuring that these frameworks are implemented effectively at all levels.
- Facilitate Indigenous women's participation in decision-making.
- Partnering with national governments and Indigenous Peoples' organizations to ensure safe access to justice, healthcare, and protection for Indigenous women facing violence, exploitation, and discrimination.
- Providing funding and platforms for Indigenous women's initiatives, particularly those focusing on climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, sustainable resource management, and intergenerational knowledge transfer.
- Support Indigenous women's access to UN Treaty body mechanisms.

5. *Where is the movement for Indigenous women's rights heading, and how can it be strengthened?*

- Reflection on movement-building: Are Indigenous women's movements inclusive and representative?
- Strengthening intergenerational leadership: How are Indigenous elders, leaders and young women being empowered and supported in their work and advocacy?
- Strategies for international advocacy and collaboration.
- Balancing traditional knowledge with contemporary challenges and opportunities.

Format:

The *interregional, intergenerational, and global high-level dialogue on the Rights of Indigenous Women* will consist of an interactive panel discussion and will be held over two days: Monday, 21 April (afternoon session, 3-hour meeting) and Tuesday, 22 April (10:00 – 11:45).

The UNPFII invites Member States to attend the session, with representation at the highest level.





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

Afternoon Meeting (15:00 – 18:00)

The meeting will begin with a high-level panel dialogue.

15:00-15:20 - Chair introduces the context, format, objective and expected outcome of the dialogue.

15:20-16:00 - Invited speakers deliver statements. They will include two Indigenous women (one elder and one youth), one representative of a Member State, and one of a UN entity (IASG or UN Women). The four speakers will preferably come from different geographical regions. Each speaker will be allocated 7-10 minutes.

16:00-17:45 - Speakers(panelists) interact with audience and PFII members.

Before the conclusion of the meeting at 17:45, panelists will be invited to provide brief comments to summarize the afternoon session.

Morning Meeting (10:00 – 11:45)

The dialogue will continue.

10:00-11:30 - Panelists interact with audience and PFII members.

1:30-11:45 - Chair makes a brief recap on the issues highlighted in the dialogue.

Participation

The high-level interactive dialogue is open to high-level officials from Member States, UN system entities, Indigenous Peoples' organizations, and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)'s annual sessions have remained critical spaces for Indigenous women to advocate for their rights and discuss issues such as land rights, gender-based violence, healthcare, and climate change adaptation. The unique platform continues to push for more inclusion of Indigenous women in decision-making processes at all levels.

The following provides a snapshot of some of the achievements in global agendas related to Indigenous women since 2015:

1. **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015):** Indigenous peoples, including women, actively contributed to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, which includes six references to Indigenous peoples. The Permanent Forum continues to provide input on integrating Indigenous rights into the Agenda, ensuring Indigenous women's representation in global, regional, and country-level processes.
2. **Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015):** This document recognized Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge in supporting sustainable livelihoods and highlighted the need for social protection, emphasizing the role of Indigenous women in preserving and transmitting traditional knowledge.
3. **Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015):** States acknowledged the importance of Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge in combating climate change, recognizing Indigenous women's critical role in this area.
4. **Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (2018):** Indigenous women were involved in this platform established by the UNFCCC to enhance the role of Indigenous peoples in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Four Indigenous women were appointed as representatives, promoting Indigenous women's participation in climate action.
5. **International Conference on Population and Development (2019):** Indigenous women participated in assessing progress towards sexual and reproductive health rights and protection from gender-based violence. The Permanent Forum recommended further action by the UN Population Fund to address these issues.
6. **Climate Action Summit (2019):** Indigenous women contributed to the Summit's discussions on climate change, emphasizing the need for their inclusion in climate action policies and ensuring their participation in preparatory meetings.
7. **UNFCCC COP25 (2019):** Indigenous women played a key role in advocacy efforts at COP25, resulting in the adoption of the Lima Work Programme on Gender, which includes a historic gender-responsive action plan.
8. **General Recommendation No. 39 on Indigenous Women (2022):** The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women adopted this recommendation, providing critical guidance to States on measures to implement the rights of Indigenous women and girls, incorporating international frameworks like the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
9. **COP27 (2022) – Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt:** Indigenous women's participation in COP27 was critical in addressing the intersection of climate change and gender equality. Indigenous women





THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE

contributed to discussions on climate adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage, particularly in regard to biodiversity preservation and the role of Indigenous knowledge in combating climate change.

10. **UN Water Conference (2023):** Indigenous women's voices were included in discussions at the UN Water Conference in March 2023. Their participation supported highlight the importance of Indigenous knowledge and practices in water conservation and management, advocating for the protection of water resources as essential to the well-being of both Indigenous women and their communities.
11. **COP15 to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2022):** Indigenous women played an important role in shaping the Global Biodiversity Framework at COP15. They advocated for the recognition of Indigenous women's roles in biodiversity conservation, traditional knowledge, and sustainable resource management, and worked to ensure that the framework addressed the rights and leadership of Indigenous women in protecting biodiversity.
12. **High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (2023):** At the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2023, Indigenous women were integral in discussions on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. Their advocacy focused on ensuring that Indigenous women's needs and priorities, such as healthcare access, education, and climate justice, were adequately addressed in global development agendas.
13. **World Summit on the Information Society Forum (WSIS) 2023:** Indigenous women were involved in discussions on information and communication technologies (ICTs), emphasizing how these technologies can be used to empower Indigenous women, preserve cultural heritage, and improve access to education and healthcare. Their participation focused on ensuring that the digital divide does not hinder Indigenous women's access to critical resources.
14. **Global Forum on Migration and Development (2023):** Indigenous women were involved in discussions at the Global Forum on Migration and Development, contributing to the dialogue on the specific challenges faced by Indigenous migrant women, including issues such as labor rights, discrimination, and protection from exploitation. Their participation helped to ensure that the voices of Indigenous women were included in global migration discussions.
15. **COP16 to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2025):** Indigenous women actively participated in discussions on biodiversity conservation and climate change at COP16. They advocated for the recognition of their traditional ecological knowledge and leadership in sustainable resource management. Indigenous women pushed for stronger commitments to ensure their rights, representation, and leadership in biodiversity decision-making processes, emphasizing the importance of gender equality and the protection of Indigenous Peoples in the global biodiversity agenda.

These achievements highlight the progress made in integrating the rights of Indigenous women into global frameworks, yet much remains to be done to ensure their full participation and empowerment.

