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International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2025 (9 August 2025)

On the occasion of the 2025 International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) honours the knowledge, resilience and rights of Indigenous Peoples across the globe.

This year's theme, "Indigenous Peoples and AI: Defending Rights, Shaping Futures," is timely. As artificial intelligence reshapes our societies at a rapid pace, we must ensure that this digital transformation is inclusive, rooted in human rights, and informed by the leadership and priorities of Indigenous Peoples themselves.

Earlier this year, IFAD hosted the Seventh Global Meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum, which focused on the theme: "*Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination: a pathway for food security and sovereignty.*" Self-determination is central to IFAD's engagement with Indigenous Peoples. This means securing Free, Prior and Informed Consent and ensuring the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples as equal partners in designing policies and programmes.

Indigenous Peoples carry intergenerational knowledge, experience and skills, and cultural heritage that are critical for the sustainability of food systems, the protection of biodiversity and the resilience of rural communities. These knowledge systems, rooted in reciprocal relationships with land and ecosystems, must not only be preserved, but actively supported and safeguarded in the digital age.

IFAD's Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples explicitly recognises the importance of these systems and the need to pass them on, especially from elders to youth. AI and other emerging technologies are tools that can serve to protect, promote and transmit their cultural heritage and ways of knowing but that also require safeguards to ensure Indigenous Peoples' knowledge is not misused and their identities are properly represented. Crucially, Indigenous Peoples must have the agency to shape the development and use of these tools and platforms, ensuring that technology supports their rights, values, and aspirations.

Across its portfolio, IFAD continues to support initiatives that reflect Indigenous Peoples' priorities and leadership. In countries such as Nepal and Lao PDR, for example, Indigenous Peoples' knowledge on food systems is being integrated into rural development strategies, building resilience and sustainability from the ground up.

As we look ahead, IFAD reaffirms its commitment to Indigenous Peoples' rights and to their meaningful participation in shaping the future, especially in the governance and application of emerging technologies such as AI. We believe that only by ensuring fairness, respect and inclusion can AI truly serve all of humanity and contribute to a just and sustainable future for generations to come.