

## Highlights: Chapter 1- The languages, culture, wisdom, and scientific and technical knowledge of Indigenous Peoples within the context of the climate crisis

### What is the scientific and technical knowledge of Indigenous Peoples?

There is no set definition of the scientific and technical knowledge of Indigenous Peoples- it is a complex and nuanced system of spiritual, cultural, scientific, philosophical, and abstract understandings found in Indigenous Peoples' worldviews. The scientific and technical knowledge of Indigenous Peoples is a distinctive, time-tested, method-driven knowledge system that can enhance and complement Western science. It centers around Indigenous Peoples' knowledge of and relationship with, the ecosystem and the environment. It is place-based and specific to each community and derives from their intimate relationship with their environment and territory from time immemorial.

### Key messages:

**Climate change has been exacerbated by historical and contemporary practices of colonialism and capitalism:** This has led to and continues to dispossess Indigenous Peoples and disrupt culturally significant multi-species relationships. To affirm the right of Indigenous Peoples to protect the natural world, States and society must guarantee the protection of thousands of years of Indigenous languages, cultures, and scientific and technical knowledge.

**Centering- not integrating- Indigenous Peoples' languages, cultures, and their scientific and technical knowledge:** It is not about incorporating Indigenous Peoples' languages, cultures and scientific and technical knowledges into the dominant Western scientific and knowledge framework, but rather about creating a more level exchange among diverse knowledge systems to better address climate change and other urgent challenges that the world is facing.

**The urgency of a collective global response:** A transformative transition is needed. All Governments, organizations, and peoples have the capacity to recognize the value of both Western and Indigenous Peoples' scientific and technical knowledges and to understand that both are necessary to address climate change and its impacts.

**The use of Indigenous Peoples' languages, cultures and scientific and technical knowledge must be grounded in the principles of free, prior and informed consent:** To prevent further exploitation of Indigenous Peoples' languages, cultures, and scientific and technical knowledge, the principle of free, prior and informed consent must be guaranteed, as provided in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.





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## Key Messages Continued:

**Indigenous Peoples are not homogenous and must not be conflated with other groups:** Indigenous Peoples live in many different parts of the world, are distinct from mainstream communities and from each other, and each distinct Indigenous culture has protocols on how to access its scientific and technical knowledge.

**Strengthening the role of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making in climate discourse:** Supporting the autonomy of Indigenous Peoples to ensure the meaningful co-creation of climate policy and legislation rooted in Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination and the principle of free, prior and informed consent. Climate solutions must take into account the realities faced by Indigenous Peoples' in both rural and urban settings; addressing the root causes of human-driven climate change, including colonial and extractive capitalism and ensuring that climate action does not have a disproportionately negative impact on Indigenous Peoples.

**The meaningful participation of Indigenous women in climate discourse:** It is vital to ensure the meaningful participation of Indigenous women in climate change discussions and decisions as their knowledge is unique to their relationship with their lands. Collectively, Indigenous women possess deep wells of specialized knowledge that can be tapped and leveraged for a transformative transition to sustainable climate change solutions. This includes by providing direct funding and technical assistance to Indigenous women, to ensure their participation in the development of both global and localized climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.



Yolngu woman participating in ceremony, also known as bunggul (traditional dance).  
Credit: Melanie Faith Dove/Yothu Yindi Foundation





## Highlights: Chapter 2- Climate Change and Indigenous Health and Well-being

### The impact of climate change on Indigenous Peoples' health and well-being

For Indigenous Peoples, environmental health and human health are inextricably linked. Indigenous Peoples have a profound relationship with their lands and territories. As ecosystems transform due to climate change, Indigenous Peoples' relationships with their lands, territories, and waters are disrupted, with serious repercussions for the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. Climate-related health impacts are rooted in, and inseparable from, Indigenous Peoples' connections to place – understood as the lands, territories, waters, and ecosystems that hold deep cultural, spiritual, and relational significance. Addressing Indigenous Peoples' health requires recognizing these complex, interconnected factors.

### Key messages:

#### **Indigenous Peoples are not vulnerable by nature, rather they are placed in situations of vulnerability**

This is as a result of social, economic and ethnic discrimination and Indigenous Peoples are further disadvantaged by the impacts of climate change. Environmental changes due to climate change are having proximal effects on the physical and mental health of Indigenous Peoples around the world. Impacts include acute and chronic physiological responses (such as illness and disease), psychological and behavioural challenges, increases in infectious diseases (including vector-borne, foodborne and waterborne illnesses), and nutrition-related conditions and diseases. Changes to the environment are also associated with growing threats to human safety due to infrastructure instability, increased wild animal attacks, and unpredictable weather patterns.

#### **Impact of climate change on the health and well-being of Indigenous women**

Indigenous women are custodians of biodiversity, bearing responsibility for gathering, fishing, agriculture, and the transmission of traditional knowledge across generations. They bear a disproportionate burden from the ecological, economic, and spiritual consequences of extractive industry operations on their lands. Loss of land access and ownership disempowers them, jeopardizing their roles, livelihoods, and transmission of scientific and technical knowledge. Yet, despite these critical roles and responsibilities, Indigenous women are often excluded from participation and decision-making. As custodians of their lands and knowledge, they must have the right to decide on matters that affect their communities, territories, and resources.

## Highlights: Chapter 2- Climate Change and Indigenous Health and Well-being

### Key Messages Continued:

#### Establishing a framework on Indigenous determinants of health

Applying a wider lens and broader conceptualization of health that better reflects the multidimensional and diverse Indigenous conceptions of health and well-being is vital to the repositioning of human engagement with the land and environment. Future approaches to climate-health research need to be interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and strengths-based and incorporate a broader conceptualization of health that better reflects Indigenous Peoples' concepts of health and well-being.

#### Recognize, center and engage Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems and values

The knowledge of Indigenous Peoples must occupy a key position in understanding the impacts of climate and other environmental changes on health and well-being. Climate science must recognize and center this knowledge to support climate change adaptation and deepen the overall understanding of climate-health impacts on Indigenous Peoples.

#### Fund, platform and support localized Indigenous-led adaptations to climate change and Indigenous health

Invest in removing social and political barriers that prevent Indigenous Peoples from leading their own communities and making decisions for themselves through rights-based approaches that respect Indigenous sovereignty and autonomy. Address gaps in research about Indigenous Peoples' health and well-being, especially the gendered impacts of climate change, including missing studies from different regions, languages and current topics. Support more research that reflects the diverse experience of Indigenous Peoples.



Cree doctor at the clinic. Credit: Terry Reith





## Highlights: Chapter 3- Lands, Territories, Environment and Resources

### The impact of climate change mitigation efforts on the lands, territories, environment, and resources of Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous Peoples are among the best environmental stewards, but they are being disproportionately affected by the climate crisis. Indigenous Peoples are directly and indirectly affected by climate change itself and also by the policies, programmes and projects focused on climate change adaptation and mitigation. Contemporary climate mitigation processes can be detrimental to Indigenous Peoples, their traditional knowledges, languages, ecosystems and health. Greenwashing, renewable energy initiatives and the imposition of protected areas and conservation in the name of climate solutions, often violate the human rights of Indigenous Peoples.

#### Key messages:

##### **Strong and secure land rights for Indigenous Peoples is critical to climate justice and addressing climate change**

Strong and secure territorial rights for Indigenous Peoples and their continued control and management of their lands and territories are essential for preventing further environmental deterioration and destruction. Indigenous Peoples continue to prosecute court proceedings to assert their internationally recognized rights to their ancestral lands and territories. States must commit to recognizing the status of Indigenous Peoples domestically and formalize their rights with regard to their lands, territories and resources to ensure they are protected.

##### **Indigenous Peoples are not anti-development**

When Indigenous Peoples are compelled to protest or promote their interests outside formal institutional channels, they are labelled “anti-development” or “anti-progress”, and their views and approaches are politicized and even criminalized. Rather, Indigenous Peoples seek the guarantee of their rights as provided in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the right to free, prior and informed consent, in all decisions that impact their lands and territories.

## Highlights: Chapter 3- Lands, Territories, Environment and Resources

### Key Messages Continued:

#### **Indigenous Peoples receive only a small portion of climate financing**

Climate financiers must shift the approach of viewing Indigenous Peoples as passive beneficiaries. Indigenous Peoples must be provided with secure, direct financing that can be channeled and allocated through their own legitimate and representative institutions. Indigenous Peoples require easily accessible project funding and financial and decision-making autonomy so that they can pursue self-determined objectives.

#### **Grievance and safeguard mechanisms are needed to guarantee the rights of Indigenous Peoples**

The United Nations and its programmes, funds and specialized agencies should immediately develop and implement grievance and safeguard mechanisms to ensure that the rights of Indigenous Peoples – as articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, are integrated and enforced in all climate change policies, programmes and projects.



Dog Sledding in Uummannaq, Greenland. Credit: UN Photo/ Mark Garten



# Highlights: Chapter 4- The Impact of Climate Change on Indigenous Economies

## What are Indigenous Economies?

Indigenous economies are place-based, deeply rooted in tradition and generally centre around small-scale land or water-based economic activities that are regenerative and sustainable in nature and anchored in the principle of reciprocity. They are not driven by financial profit but rather grounded in the cosmovisions of Indigenous Peoples, which prioritize community-led practices, the sustainable management of lands and resources, and a keen awareness of the impact humans have on the environment. Indigenous economies are diverse, but are guided by time-tested knowledge, technology and practices that have long contributed to environmental well-being.

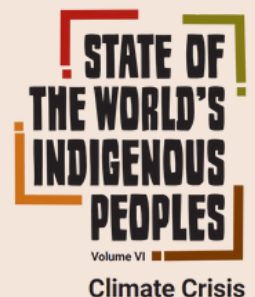
### Key messages:

#### **The climate crisis is exacerbating inequalities between Indigenous Peoples and mainstream society**

Long-standing inequalities between Indigenous Peoples and mainstream society are being worsened by the climate crisis. The weakening of the Indigenous Peoples' economic base due to climate change has deepened these disparities. Climate change has severely affected the hunting, fishing and agricultural activities that Indigenous Peoples rely on for their sustenance and livelihoods, further threatening their economic security and well-being.

#### **Indigenous Peoples' economies have human and environmental well-being at the center**

The economic systems of many Indigenous Peoples across the globe are restorative and regenerative in nature, promoting the economic advancement of communities while also supporting responsible and sustainable land and resource management and long-term environmental conservation. There is a stark difference between Indigenous economic values focused on sustainability, stewardship, and accountability and Western economic values such as capitalism, wealth creation, competition, and externalization.





# Highlights: Chapter 4- The Impact of Climate Change on Indigenous Economies

## Key Messages Continued:

### **Strengthening the economies of Indigenous Peoples**

States should support the development of more inclusive economies including by adopting laws, regulations, policies, and targeted programs to preserve and strengthen Indigenous economies. Governments must work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples to identify where support is needed, what tools and resources are appropriate, and how they should be implemented. Such efforts must be guided by the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples, aligned with their values and priorities, and carried out with their free, prior and informed consent.

### **The rights of Indigenous Peoples must be guaranteed in order to support and strengthen Indigenous Peoples' economies**

States must recognize Indigenous Peoples' rights provided in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with regard to their lands, territories, resources, traditional knowledge and cultures – all of which form the basis of their economies. States and private actors must guarantee and observe the principle of free, prior and informed consent and ensure the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in the design, planning, execution, and evaluation of initiatives that are likely to affect them.

### **Financing, investment, and development must ensure human rights are at the center**

States should ensure that human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples are recognized and enforced in corporate law, trade agreements, the credit and insurance sectors, investment arrangements, and other areas and sectors closely linked to business practices. States should address the actual or potential impact of major development projects on Indigenous Peoples in order to appropriately manage the attendant risks, with particular attention given to extractive industry activities, infrastructure development, and green growth initiatives.



Akha women collecting tea in Thailand. Credit: Canva







## Highlights: Chapter 5- Policymaking and the Rule of Law

### How are Indigenous Peoples participating in climate negotiations?

Indigenous Peoples have worked tirelessly to make their voices heard in international negotiations. While decision-making remains in the hands of States, there has been progress — from no reference to Indigenous Peoples, to participate as observers, and recognition of their rights under the Paris Agreement. Article 7(5) specifically acknowledges the role of “traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local knowledge systems.” Yet, Indigenous Peoples continue to push for more direct engagement and negotiation with States.

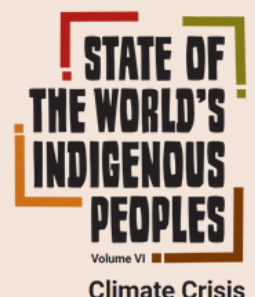
### Key messages:

#### **Indigenous Peoples continue to be marginalized as observers in climate change negotiations**

Despite being amongst the most seriously affected by the direct consequences of environmental degradation and the loss of ecosystems, Indigenous Peoples continue to have limited participation in climate change multilateral dialogues. Indigenous Peoples have long advocated for States to hear their voices and acknowledge the potential benefits of Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge and input, which has resulted in important progress, however Indigenous Peoples continue to participate only as observers, with no avenue for direct influence or for a seat at the table in negotiations.

#### **Indigenous Peoples must be guaranteed full and effective participation in climate related processes**

To strengthen the participation of Indigenous Peoples in multilateral dialogues, it is recommended that specialized social groups be established for various priority areas. These groups should take an interdisciplinary approach, promoting the genuine integration of Western and Indigenous Peoples’ scientific and technical knowledge in addressing the climate crisis and other environmental challenges. Having dedicated discourse spaces will ensure that Indigenous perspectives and knowledge systems are valued and respected in international decision-making and will allow Indigenous Peoples to contribute meaningfully and effectively to adaptation and mitigation efforts.



## Highlights: Chapter 5- Policymaking and the Rule of Law

### Key Messages Continued:

#### **Indigenous Peoples need direct access to climate funds**

It is crucial that Indigenous Peoples be provided with direct access to climate funds to ensure that their needs and perspectives are adequately represented in climate action. It is particularly critical that dedicated funds be made available to support research by and for Indigenous Peoples, as this will strengthen their capacity to develop innovative and culturally appropriate solutions that contribute meaningfully to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

#### **States should create opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to contribute to climate discourse**

Due to the intergovernmental nature of climate processes, States have an opportunity to create formal mechanisms in which Indigenous Peoples are valued and heard and can play a meaningful role in advancing climate solutions. The global environmental policies adopted under the principal conventions have encouraged the creation of national participatory spaces for Indigenous Peoples, allowing them to contribute to policy design at the country and local levels. This can also be achieved by States including Indigenous Peoples as equal partners in official government delegations, supporting Indigenous Peoples to exercise greater influence, share Indigenous Peoples' perspectives and priorities and ensuring that their rights are recognized and be reflected in the official positions and outcomes of negotiations.



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Credit: UN DESA DISD/ Ines Belchior, Ronja Porho

