

**TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

Closing Statement delivered by

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Chairperson of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

Distinguished observers from Member States, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations, the Inter-Governmental system, non-governmental organizations, the academia and the media,

Indigenous sisters and brothers:

As we bring the 24th session of the Permanent Forum to a close, I want to reflect on the depth, urgency, and power of what we have carried forward together over these two weeks.

This has been a demanding session, rich with knowledge and rooted in lived realities. Each agenda item brought forward experiences and analysis that sharpened our understanding of the systemic challenges Indigenous Peoples face—and the solutions we are generating, grounded in our own worldviews, rights, and strengths.

We opened with the participation of high-level leaders, including the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and welcomed many representatives from Member States. I thank them for their engagement. But most importantly, I thank you—Indigenous delegates and representatives—for your presence, your perseverance, and your unwavering commitment to advancing the rights and dignity of Indigenous Peoples in every region of the world.

The special theme of this session—“**Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) within UN Member States and the UN System: Identifying Good Practices and Addressing Challenges**”—guided our deliberations.

States recognized that UNDRIP affirms the individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples. It has influenced the drafting of constitutions and laws, and contributed to legal and policy reforms. But we also heard clearly that implementation remains uneven, and in many places, symbolic. **Marginalization and exclusion persist.** These are not remnants of the past—they are often the result of deliberate policies designed to erase Indigenous Peoples’ identities and suppress our systems of knowledge and governance.

Yet, in every region, Indigenous Peoples continue to resist and reclaim. We exist not as fragmented individuals, but as *Peoples*—deeply rooted in our cultures, languages, and ways of life. Consistently we heard of the important need for a clear distinction between Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

For the first time, the Forum convened a high-level dialogue on the rights of **Indigenous women**. It was long overdue. We heard testimony of their leadership in protecting human rights, revitalizing Indigenous languages, advancing climate solutions, and stewarding biodiversity. Indigenous women are at the frontlines—not only surviving, but transforming the conditions of their Peoples. Their voices must not only be heard—they must be **central** to all decision-making that affects their lives, territories, and futures.

Another theme heard throughout the session was the urgent need for **education that is Indigenous-led and culturally appropriate**. While education is recognized as a universal right,

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for many Indigenous Peoples it remains inaccessible—or worse, assimilationist. Instead of empowering our Peoples, many systems of education continue to ignore or erase our languages, histories, and identities.

Education should be liberating, not colonizing. As affirmed in UNDRIP, education rooted in our cultures, our languages and knowledge systems is essential—not only for dignity and development—but for the survival of our Peoples and lifeways.

We also heard compelling calls for the protection of Indigenous **lands and territories**, especially in light of the expanding demand for critical minerals. These pressures threaten not only Indigenous Peoples' rights, but the ecological balance upon which humanity depends. States, companies, and multilateral actors must center the rights of Indigenous Peoples in all actions related to land, climate, and development.

We must also urgently address the **criminalization of Indigenous leaders** who defend their lands, territories and resources. Their struggle is not only for their Peoples—it is for all of us, for future generations, for biodiversity and climate balance. We reaffirm: **defending Mother Earth is not a crime—it is a responsibility.**

Among the most inspiring aspects of this session has been the presence and leadership of **Indigenous youth**. Your courage, clarity, and vision give us hope. You are not the leaders of tomorrow—you are the leaders of today. Stay grounded in your Peoples, carry your knowledge with pride, and walk guided by the spirit of your ancestors. We need your strength now.

Throughout this session, we have seen encouraging practices in the implementation of UNDRIP. But much more remains to be done. We must continue to insist on the **full recognition**

of Indigenous Peoples as Peoples—not stakeholders, not civil society, but rights-holders under international law.

Our identities, our rights, and our dignity are not negotiable. They are affirmed in the Declaration—and we carry that affirmation forward.

Over the past two weeks, powerful voices rose from across the seven socio-cultural regions—from the Arctic to the Pacific Islands, from the Andes to the African savannas and beyond. Many of you joined for the first time. I hope you felt seen, heard, and included. If you did not have the opportunity to speak in the formal sessions, I offer my sincere apologies. Over 230 statements from Indigenous Peoples’ organizations were delivered, in addition to interventions from States and UN entities.

But even beyond the microphone, your presence made a difference. Your participation in over 100 side events, your exchanges with Forum members, States, and UN representatives—all contributed to shaping this session. These exchanges are invaluable.

The UN system can feel complex and inaccessible. But we must not lose faith in international cooperation. Indigenous Peoples have long struggled to have their voices heard in the United Nations in New York, Geneva and other venues. Over a century ago, our ancestors believed that multilateralism could offer a path to justice. We must honor that belief by making these spaces as meaningful and as effective as possible.

Let us not leave this Forum with speeches alone. Let us leave with a renewed commitment to action—**grounded in respect, responsibility, and the recognition that Indigenous Peoples are Peoples with rights.**

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Let us walk forward with unity and strength. Let us remain rooted in our values, inspired by our ancestors, and committed to preparing a better world for the generations yet to come.

As we close this 24th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, I extend my warmest wishes to each of you. To all Indigenous Peoples, to our partners in the UN system, Member States, and organizations: thank you for your contributions, your presence, and your commitment.

May you travel home safely—carrying with you not only the experiences of these two weeks, but also the strength of our shared purpose. Until we meet again, may your paths be guided by wisdom, resilience, and the spirit of your Peoples.