

**Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Twenty-fourth session
New York, 21 April – 2 May 2025**

**Information Note submitted by the International Indian Treaty
Council, Indigenous Peoples Organization reporting on the
“4th DECLARATION FOR HEALTH, LIFE AND DEFENSE OF OUR
LANDS, RIGHTS AND FUTURE GENERATIONS”**

International Indian Treaty Council

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Twenty-Fourth Session, 21 April – 2 May 2025

Agenda Item 5 (e) Interregional, intergenerational and global dialogue on “The rights of Indigenous women”

Information Note submitted by the International Indian Treaty Council, Indigenous Peoples Organization reporting on the “4th DECLARATION FOR HEALTH, LIFE AND DEFENSE OF OUR LANDS, RIGHTS AND FUTURE GENERATIONS”

Adopted by the 4th International Indigenous Women’s Symposium on Environmental Violence, JANUARY 24 - 26, 2025
K’ULJAY – CASA DE LOS ENCUENTROS
GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA

Organized and co-sponsored by the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), the International Indigenous Women’s Forum (FIMI), the National Coordination of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA) and the Centre for the Indigenous Peoples’ Autonomy and Development (CADPI)

We, Indigenous Women, from 20 countries and territories from the seven regions of the world, guardians of the forests, deserts, oceans, tundra, grasslands, mountains, islands, and wetlands, gathered at the **4th International Indigenous Women’s Symposium on Environmental Violence**, at K’uljay – Casa de los Encuentros in Guatemala City, Guatemala on January 24-26, 2025.

We recognized that the concerns we raised and the issues we discussed at this historic gathering are matters of extreme and even life-or-death urgency for the lives and survival of our families, Peoples, and Mother Earth. This Declaration and its commitments reflect this urgency.

We thank the spirits and ancestors of the Maya Peoples and the Indigenous Peoples of Guatemala for welcoming us to their traditional homelands. We also express our heartfelt thanks to the Symposium organizers and to all those who supported this historic event.

In our opening Maya ceremony, we remembered and thanked our ancestors, leaders, grandmothers, and grandfathers from the far and recent past. Their courage and wisdom continue to guide us as we face the challenges shared at this Symposium. We are also thankful for the blessing and invocation of the water spirits that was held on the second morning. We recognized that water was our first home, and that the protection of water in all its forms is a particular responsibility of Indigenous Women through our prayers and ceremonies, as well as our activism for Environmental Health and Justice.

We shared our struggles, cultural understandings, knowledge, research, and lived experiences focusing on the impacts of environmental violence on Indigenous Women, girls, and Peoples, including the deadly effects of environmental toxics on our reproductive, maternal, and intergenerational health. We built on and amplified the voices of the grass-roots women, mothers and grandmothers, midwives, traditional healers, and community leaders who first raised their concerns about increasing birth defects, stillbirths, leukemia, and other cancers that they were seeing in their homelands.

We greatly appreciate the participation of the women knowledge holders, traditional practitioners, midwives, ceremonial leaders, food producers, and healers who shared their knowledge and guidance with us during the Symposium. We shared testimonies, case studies, and lived experiences from the participants about the neglect of governments for the rights and well-being of Indigenous Peoples, in blatant violation of their national laws and international commitments.

We heard each others' testimonies about the continuing and worsening contamination of our lands, territories, waters, and bodies resulting from activities such as agro-business and industrial food production; impacts and false solutions to climate change; extractive industries including legal and illegal mining, fossil fuels development such as tar sands, oil drilling and pipelines; dumping and incineration of toxic wastes including plastics; current and abandoned refineries; uranium mining and the nuclear fuel cycle, including testing; narcotrafficking and narcotics production; hydroelectric dams; mercury contamination from past and current gold mining, coal fired power plants and dentistry; and sexual exploitation and trafficking tied to extractive industries resulting in trauma, sexually transmitted diseases, and the epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

We recognized the deep connections between colonization, resource extraction, and climate change, which collectively undermine the traditional decision-making, leadership, teaching roles, and cultural and healing practices of Indigenous Women in our own homelands, Peoples, and families. We affirm that environmental violence is linked to physical, emotional, psychological, cultural, and spiritual violence.

We were appalled and outraged to hear about increasing cases of repression, criminalization, threats and assassination of human rights and environmental defenders, as well as spiritual and cultural leaders, who are standing against these activities in our homelands. We also heard about the environmental violence caused by increasing militarization, armed conflicts, and the use of mercenary and private militia in and around Indigenous Peoples' lands and territories, recognizing that military forces are among the world's greatest polluters.

We recognized the dire urgency of the combined climate and bio-diversity crisis. We reaffirmed our opposition to the increasing threats posed by false solutions being implemented in our territories in the name of "Climate Mitigation," "Green Energy," and "Biodiversity Protection." These include mining of so-called "transition minerals" such as lithium, nickel, and copper carried out without our Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and contaminating and depleting our water sources. They also include geoengineering and carbon offsets, as well as the imposition of so-called "protected areas" under the 30x30 program resulting in forced relocation and displacement of our Peoples and the loss of cultural practices and food production activities that Indigenous Women are responsible to protect.

We affirm the recognition of our rights to our lands, territories and resources in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as our unique Spiritual with our traditional lands and waters as affirmed in both the UN Declaration and the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We celebrate the recent advances in the international arena to address these issues, including the recognition of Environmental Violence in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women's (CEDAW) General Recommendation 39 in 2022; the 2020 call by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human Rights on wealthy states to halt the export of pesticides they have banned in their own counties; the decision in October 2024 by the United Nations Food and Agriculture (FAO) Committee on Agriculture (COAG) to amend the International Code of Conduct on Pesticides Management to include the right of Indigenous Peoples to FPIC regarding the use of pesticides in their territories; and the July 2022 resolution by the UN General Assembly recognizing that a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment is a universal human right.

We affirm our support, appreciation and encouragement for the Indigenous Women who continue to carry out the very challenging long-term work at the United Nations to uphold our Rights and Guiding Principles. We will continue to provide them with our information, urgent situations, testimonies, research, and case studies to carry our voices into the international arena. We welcome information about opportunities for our participation in international processes addressing Environmental Violence and the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We call upon international bodies and mechanisms to recognize the relationship between Environmental Toxics and Reproductive Health, as well as the impacts of Environmental Violence, to prioritize this issue and to work for effective solutions in the context of their own mandates, in collaboration with Indigenous Women from all regions.

While we recognize the progress we have made in the international arena, especially in policies addressing the use of pesticides and Persistent Organic Pollutants, we also express our concerns about the devastating and worsening impacts in our lands and territories where highly hazardous and banned substances continue to be used indiscriminately. This indiscriminate use includes aerial spraying over our homes and schools, as well as applications by hand without protection or information about impacts. We ask decision-makers: how many more of our children will have to die and suffer permanent disabilities before these practices are finally halted?

We know that the spiritual forces of the universe that support justice and life are with us. We assert our ancestral knowledge, which will uphold best practices for healing and protecting Mother Earth, food systems, health, lands, and waters. Our voices are powerful, and we will prevail.

Based on these key messages, we speak with one voice and express by consensus the following shared commitments:

1. We affirm and endorse the recommendations presented in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd ***Declarations for Health, Life and Defense of Our Lands, Rights and Future Generations*** from the first three Symposia held in 2010, 2012, and 2018. We will continue to work on their full implementation.

2. We honor and will continue to protect one another and the life-giving generosity of our Mother Earth that we carry as Indigenous Women. We are life givers, leaders, decision-makers, healers, protectors and caretakers of our waters, native seeds, lands, territories, food sources, languages, cultural and spiritual practices, histories, and future generations.
3. Recognizing the intersectionality of all forms of violence against Indigenous Women, including Environmental Violence, we commit ourselves to continue promoting multidimensional, culturally relevant initiatives for its prevention and elimination.
4. We commit to continue building our unity and shared determination to halt government and corporate activities and policies on the national and international levels that result in Environmental Violence in all its forms and its devastating impacts on our health, lives, lands, territories and waters, and our future generations.
5. We continue to promote recognition of the distinct, unique individual and collective rights and identity of Indigenous Peoples and reject all attempts by states, United Nations bodies, and others to conflate us with any other entities.
6. We commit to defend our rights to self-determination, which includes governance over our lands, territories and resources, as well as the exercise and implementation of Indigenous laws and legal systems.
7. We commit to continuing challenging the impunity of the states and corporations whose actions and policies contaminate us and impact on our sacred life-giving capacities, including through advocacy and action on the local, national levels including through the current development of a legally binding UN Treaty on Transnationals and Human Rights.
8. We will remember, honor, and continue to defend Indigenous persons who have been assaulted, disappeared, tortured, assassinated, incarcerated, criminalized, threatened, and exiled, including many who have been labeled terrorists and “anti-nationals,” for defending their recognized rights, lands, territories, resources, and the health of their families and Peoples from extractive exploitation, appropriation, and contamination.
9. We demand respect and recognition for our knowledge holders, midwives, healers, and spiritual and ceremonial leaders and their essential roles and call for a halt to government, corporate, and religious repression and disrespect for the vital services that they provide to Indigenous Women and families.
10. We denounce all stages of profit-motivated activities such as mineral, oil and gas exploitation, industrial agriculture using toxic pesticides, and narcotics production that undermine women’s lives, maternal and intergenerational health, culture and spiritual practices, and our social relationships within our families and Peoples.
11. We call for a halt to the proliferation of armed conflicts, wars and militarization in our lands and territories, and recognize that these activities are, in many cases, tools for intimidation and forced displacement of Indigenous Peoples to clear the way for extractive projects, agribusiness, tourism, and the establishment of so-called “protected areas.” We also endorse the Indigenous Peace-Building Declaration from April 2024, including its recognition of conflicts constituting Environmental Violence.
12. We call on states to implement their legal obligations under the United Nations Minamata Convention on Mercury, which includes the elimination of new gold mines, clean-up and remediation of contaminated sites, and upholding Indigenous Peoples’ right to FPIC regarding Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) in our lands and territories.
13. We continue to demand an immediate halt to the international export and import of highly hazardous pesticides that have been banned for use or extremely restricted in the exporting countries, a practice representing blatant environmental racism and violence that results in birth defects, reproductive system cancers, on the breastmilk and the connection with our babies, and many deaths among the Indigenous Peoples in the importing countries

- where they are applied indiscriminately. We will work to ensure that the commitment to amend the International Code of Conduct on Pesticides to recognize the right to FPIC of Indigenous Peoples as affirmed in Article 29 of the UN Declaration will be upheld by 2026.
14. We recognize the extreme and increasing toxic impacts of the dumping and incineration of plastic wastes, creating micro-plastics that contaminate our bodies, lands, waters, and traditional food sources. We support the ongoing engagement of Indigenous Women in the development of the UN Plastics Treaty and urge states to specifically include recognition for the internationally recognized rights of Indigenous Peoples and language to safeguard these rights, now and in the future.
 15. We will continue to support each other's struggles against imposed fossil fuels and extractive activities that are explicitly harmful to Mother Earth, including projects related to so-called "green energy" and "green transition" minerals such as lithium, nickel, cobalt, and uranium and the water extraction and exploitation caused by these activities.
 16. We call upon humanitarian doctors, qualified medical personnel, and health agencies to accurately diagnose, report, and treat the real causes of illnesses related to exposure to pesticides, military waste, Persistent Organic Pollutants, mercury, toxic mining wastes, and other environmental contaminants.
 17. We will prioritize and create opportunities for skills-sharing, capacity building, and training so that Indigenous Women, youth, and leaders can increase their collective understandings and more effectively mobilize advocacy efforts to address the impacts of Environmental Violence and toxic contamination of our lands, waters, territories, and implement safe and effective alternatives. Capacity building should also include ways to defend our rights using international standards, bodies, and processes to build future generations of environmental and human rights defenders prepared to confront and halt these dangerous and deadly activities on all levels.
 18. We firmly oppose false solutions to catastrophic climate change, which create further Environmental Violence, including forest and bio-offsets, bioengineering, carbon trading and sequestration, plastics offsets, blue and green economy and other "green energy" projects. We endorse the calls by many Indigenous Peoples around the world for the implementation of Indigenous led Just Transition away from fossil fuels including oil drilling and tar sands production and call for a moratorium on all new fossil fuel development as a matter of great urgency.
 19. We denounce corporate and government programs that promote false solutions and economic cooptation of our Peoples, creating on-going colonization that coerces our Peoples away from our traditional cultural lifeways. We commit to revitalizing our own Indigenous economies and cultural lifeways, based on our self-determination, Indigenous methods and peacemaking, mediation, and negotiation to decolonize ourselves from internalized oppression and lateral violence.
 20. We will continue to share and implement effective solutions based on our knowledge, sciences, and technologies, including through intergenerational knowledge sharing, based on our knowledge and wisdom as Indigenous Women, including ways to plant, weave, rematriate our original seeds, and use our traditional medicines and practices to restore the health and wellbeing of our bodies and spirits, as well as the health of our children, families, Peoples, and Mother Earth.
 21. We will work together with our Peoples and organizations to implement these recommendations, recognizing the extreme urgency of the situations we are facing. We will continue to find and create opportunities to meet, to provide mutual support, and strengthen our networks on the country, regional, and international levels, calling on our allies, states, and international bodies to help us implement them.

Adopted by consensus in Guatemala City, Guatemala January 26th, 2025

Participants attending the Symposium represented the following:

Consejo Internacional de Tratados Indios/International Indian Treaty Council (CITI/IITC); Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala (CONAVIGUA); Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas (FIMI); Centro para la Autonomía y Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (CADPI); Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN); Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network; Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace; Center for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North; Independent Guåhan (Guam); Pacific Indigenous Knowledge Centre; Confederación Unida del Pueblo Taíno (UCTP); Asociación de Mujeres Abogadas Indígenas; NDN Collective; Itepo Ito Te Aniasakane/Proyecto de Salud Rio Yaqui; Di sugave a nana Shimjai; Asamblea de los Pueblos Indígenas por la Soberanía Alimentaria AC; Centro de Culturas Indígenas del Perú (CHIRAPAC); Indigenous Pastoralists Non-Governmental Organization's Forum (PINGOS); Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (AIDSESEP); Red Nacional por la Defensa de la Soberanía Alimentaria en Guatemala (REDSAG); FUNDEBASE; Resistencia La Puya; Colectivo Tz'unun Ya'; Gobierno Ancestral Plurinacional; Asociación Grupo Integral de Mujeres Sanjuaneras (AGIMS); Indigenous Justice; Association Tinhinan; Center for Indigenous Peoples Research and Development (CIPRED); y el Coletivo Inamatí Xanê Terenoe - Juventudes Terena, Brazil.