



**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND UNESCO 2023:
OUTCOMES OF QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE TWENTY-
THIRD SESSION OF UN PERMANENT FORUM ON
INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

Questionnaire to UN system

Questionnaire to the UN system agencies, funds and programmes and intergovernmental organizations

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII) was established by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 2000/22. The Permanent Forum is mandated to provide expert advice and recommendations on Indigenous issues to the ECOSOC and through the Council to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes; to raise awareness and promote the integration and coordination of activities related to Indigenous issues within the UN system; prepare and disseminate information on Indigenous issues; and promote respect for and full application of the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and follow up the effectiveness of the Declaration.

The Indigenous Peoples Development Branch/Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues invites UN system agencies, funds and programmes and other inter-governmental organizations to complete the attached questionnaire on any action taken or planned in response to the Permanent Forum's recommendations, the system-wide action plan on rights of indigenous peoples (SWAP) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The responses will be compiled into a report for the 2024 session of the Permanent Forum. In your responses, please, include information on progress and challenges related to Indigenous women, Indigenous persons with disabilities, Indigenous older persons, and Indigenous children and youth.

All responses will be placed on the DESA/DISD website on Indigenous Peoples at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/>

Please note that the term "Indigenous Peoples" must be capitalized as per the UN Editorial Manual.

If you have any objections to your response being made available on our website, please inform our office accordingly.

Please submit your completed questionnaire by **15 November 2023** to:

Indigenous Peoples and Development Branch
Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Division for Inclusive Social Development
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations Headquarters
New York, USA 10017
Email: indigenous_un@un.org

Subject: Response to SWAP questionnaire

Questionnaire

Please provide information on the following:

A. Recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and input to the 2024 session

- i. Please provide information on measures taken since your last update to the Forum on the implementation or planned implementation of the recommendations of the PFII.

[Recommendation on Indigenous Languages \(Para 32 of the 2022 UNPFII report at its 21st session\)](#)

The Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group (MLE WG) and its partners conducted a mapping of languages in education policies of 46 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The MLE WG is co-Chaired by the UNESCO Regional office in Bangkok and UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Region. The activity aimed to 1) review and identify key national policy documents regarding languages in education, particularly official and non-dominant languages, including Indigenous languages; and 2) develop country profiles with quick overviews on language-in-education policies to inform the development of regional and country-level strategies for advancing mother tongue-based multilingual education. For each country, the MLE WG reviewed documents including but not limited to constitutions, language policies, education acts, education policies, education sector plans, actions, curricula, research studies, and more. From the mapping it was found that:

At national level, 42 of the 46 countries (<https://asiapacificmle.net/country-profile>) have policies that mention languages, and more than half (25) included non-dominant and/or Indigenous languages.

The regional trends from the mapping showed that:

- International languages such as English or Russian and/or the dominant language(s) often appear as official and/or national language(s). Such languages are increasingly being introduced to learners at younger ages in the pre-primary and early primary levels.
- Non-dominant Indigenous and ethnic minority languages are not likely to be used for official and national purposes and only occasionally have official uses (for instruction, subject, etc.) in education.
- When available, evidence-based research demonstrates implementation challenges in supporting first language-based multilingual education.

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[Recommendation on Indigenous Languages and Climate Change \(Para 41 of the 2022 UNPFII report at its 21st session\):](#)

UNESCO undertook the following initiatives:

- A research study conducted by Maasai community researchers in the United Republic of Tanzania from December 2022 to February 2023 revealed the importance of Indigenous knowledge in understanding climate change and fostering resilience within their society. This knowledge, deeply ingrained within their culture, focuses on weather patterns and climate change, and is passed down through various means:
 - Maasai Seasonal Calendar: The community uses an oral calendar to understand seasonal variations and plan activities accordingly, serving as an alert system for potential risks and disasters.
 - Indigenous Knowledge Holders: Respected elders are custodians of wisdom in biodiversity, traditional medicine and weather forecasting, which they acquire from observations of plants, animals, atmospheric conditions, stars and cloud observations. They share their knowledge through meetings, songs, tales, and poems.
 - Olpul/Ilpuli (Meat Camps): These gatherings in the wilderness involve communal meat consumption, medicinal plant use, and education about tree species for medicinal purposes, weather forecasting, cloud and star observations, and animal behavior interpretation.

UNESCO noted how Indigenous knowledge plays a crucial role in sustaining the resilience of these communities as well as their environments.

[Recommendation on FPIC \(Para 24 of the 2023 UNPFII report at its 22nd session\) and Recommendation on building coherence among the four UN decades on water, oceans, ecosystem restoration and Indigenous Peoples' languages \(Para 41 of the 2023 UNPFII report\):](#)

UNESCO continues to encourage cooperation, communication and synergies between relevant UN Decades to improve access and quality of participation of Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore, UNESCO continues to advance practices on the application of Free Prior and Informed Consent in different contexts, including UN related research initiatives. The activities include, among others, Indigenous-led research on various issues (e.g. biodiversity, climate change, disaster risk reduction, ocean, freshwater, and traditional fire management) in Brazil, Botswana, Chad, Guyana, New Zealand, Nigeria, Suriname, United republic of Tanzania, and Venezuela. The research findings aim to improve the recognition of these Indigenous traditional practices and promote their inclusion in related policies and plans, and facilitate collaboration between experts, policy-makers and Indigenous Peoples.

In 2023, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Technical Support Unit on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (TSU-ILK), hosted at UNESCO LINKS, organized dialogues on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) as part of various IPBES assessments:

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- Thematic Assessment of Interlinkages ('Nexus'): The dialogue focused on the interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food, and health, examining how these relate to sustainable development goals. It took place in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in January 2023, with a follow-up dialogue in Montreal, Canada, in November 2023.
- Transformative Change Assessment: This assessment explored the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and options for transformative change. A dialogue on future scenarios and the IPBES assessment of transformative change was held in Leticia, Colombia, in February 2023, with another dialogue in Agadir, Morocco, in December 2023.
- Business and Biodiversity Assessment: This assessment aimed to understand how businesses depend on and impact biodiversity. The first dialogue for this assessment occurred in Bogota, Colombia, in September 2023.

Additionally, at the tenth session of the IPBES Plenary in Bonn, Germany, the *Thematic Assessment of Invasive Alien Species and their Control* was accepted. This report is the result of four years of work by 86 experts from 49 countries and synthesizes information from over 13,000 references into a comprehensive scientific assessment and concise summary document for policy makers. It involved significant contributions from Indigenous Peoples, facilitated by the IPBES TSU-ILK, provides insights into controlling invasive alien species.

Furthermore, the UNESCO-based IPBES TSU-ILK created materials for Indigenous Peoples and local communities related to the "Methodological Assessment regarding the Diverse Conceptualization of Multiple Values of Nature and its Benefits" and the Assessment Report on the Sustainable Use of Wild Species. (<https://www.ipbes.net/ilk-publication-resources>).

The IPBES TSU-ILK also conducted a review of Indigenous and Local Knowledge in IPBES assessments, published in August 2023, highlighting the valuable contributions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to the assessment processes.

The thematic dialogues and the methodological material on recognizing and working with ILK in IPBES systematically include guidance on working with free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

As concerns tangible cultural heritage, Specific Operational Guidelines on human rights-based approach and participation of Indigenous Peoples in the identification, nomination, management and protection processes of World Heritage properties were adopted in 2019 by the World Heritage Committee, governing body of the World Heritage Convention, with the introduction of clauses on ensuring the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples prior to the inclusion of a site on national tentative lists, throughout the nomination process for new properties. The first nominations with the format including the obligation to identify the Indigenous Peoples concerned by the nominated property and to demonstrate the obtaining of their FPIC were submitted in February 2023 and will be examined by the World Heritage Committee at its 46th session in 2024.

[Recommendation on World Cultural and Natural Heritage \(Para 92 of the 2023 UNPFII report at its 22nd session\) and recommendation on Methods of Work and Culture \(Para 93 of the 2022 UNPFII report at its 21st session\):](#)

In the area of the interaction between culture and arts, Indigenous experts have contributed to various stages of the global consultation process towards developing the future UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education, which was adopted by Member States, during the UNESCO World Conference on Culture and Arts Education held in Adu Dhabi, United Arab

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Emirates in February 2024. One of the five strategic goals of the document elaborates on contextual, quality, lifelong and life-wide learning, which promotes education approaches that include Indigenous languages, ways of knowing and being, and that engage cultural heritage bearers in education, including to foster the responsible stewardship of the environment and to ground a stronger connection between learners of all ages and backgrounds, their communities and environments.

The International Indigenous Peoples Forum on World Heritage (IIPFWH), established in 2017 as tool for reflection on the involvement of Indigenous Peoples in the identification, conservation and management of World Heritage properties, particularly in relation to nominations, participated as an observer in the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee (September 2023). In its decisions, the Committee noted with appreciation the collaboration between UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies with the IIPFWH, welcomed their intent to organize in early 2024, an international expert workshop on the recognition and respect for the heritage values of Indigenous Peoples within the framework of the World Heritage Convention and requested UNESCO to include a report on it at its 46th session.

Within the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural heritage, UNESCO is implementing thematic initiatives on safeguarding living heritage in priority areas such as climate change, livelihoods and sustainable development. Two Indigenous experts have contributed to the consultation process and participated in an expert meeting held in UNESCO in September 2023 aimed at developing the future ‘Guidance note on economic dimensions of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding’, examined by the eighteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of the 2003 Convention in December 2023.

UNESCO is also currently developing a concept note on ‘Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Context of Climate Change’. Indigenous experts are taking part in the review process and specific case studies are looking at Indigenous knowledge in conjunction to climate change and other fields (including Aboriginal fire management in Australia, Inuit knowledge for monitoring climate change in the Arctic, and the effects of climate change on pastoralist Indigenous Peoples across East Africa).

Furthermore, during 2022-2023 International Assistance from UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund continued to provide financial support for safeguarding projects in favour of Indigenous peoples, notably in Central African Republic, Mali, Nicaragua, Pakistan and Peru.

A number of activities have to be reported concerning the **return and restitution of cultural property** related to Indigenous Peoples:

- UNESCO organized on 27 June 2023 a round table on new forms of agreements and cooperation in the field of return and restitution of cultural property. Two cases of return and restitution of cultural property involving Indigenous Peoples were presented:
 - Representatives of the Return of Cultural Heritage (ROCH) Program and from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) presented the repatriation of 183 objects from the Museum of the University of Manchester to the Anindilyakwa community (Australia). The handover ceremony took place on 5 September 2023 in Manchester, in the presence of community representatives and UNESCO.
 - The Capuchin Order of Tilburg (Netherlands) has preserved various textiles, clothing, and ritual objects from the West Kalimantan region in Indonesia. In 2004, the creation

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of the local museum in West Kalimantan was signed by the Sintang District and the Tropenmuseum in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the support of technical assistance for the establishment of the cultural centre that includes a museum and a training and awareness centre. The objects were returned by the Capuchin order of Tilburg in 2008 and are now in the collections of the newly established museum.

- UNESCO is exploring the possibility of including the return and restitution of sacred objects and human remains of indigenous peoples in the discussions of the Intergovernmental Committee on Return and Restitution (ICPRCP) and in its capacity-building programme on illicit trafficking of cultural property. Discussions have been held with the International Indian Treaty Council to this end.

In this context, a regional capacity-building training course for law enforcement and museum professionals on the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property was held in Rio de Janeiro from 2 to 4 October 2023 with 14 countries from Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa, which examined indigenous peoples as key players in the preservation and inventorying of cultural heritage.

- In addition, UNESCO is working on developing Model Provisions on the Prevention and Fight Against the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property. This project aims to support States in strengthening their operational and normative framework for the protection of movable heritage. These provisions address the protection of elements of the heritage of Indigenous Peoples and invite States to recognize and, where appropriate, apply special legal protection for the cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples.

In close collaboration with the Guaraní Peoples, UNESCO's Scientific and Technical Advisory Board of the 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage visited Paraguay, at the request of the State, to strengthen the safeguarding of three Paraguayan warships from the war against the Triple Alliance (1864-1870), which had been exposed to looting and deterioration in their conservation conditions due to the dramatic drop in the water level of the Paraguay River in the second half of 2022. In close cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, the mission documented technical details and designed recovery and mitigation measures, helping to strengthen the technical capabilities of the staff responsible for safeguarding the underwater heritage, improving the coordination of emergency response and raising social awareness.

[Recommendation on Indigenous media \(Para 10 of the 2023 UNPFII report at its 22nd session\):](#)

To address this recommendation, UNESCO Communication and Information (CI) Sector, is collaborating with UN entities and Indigenous Peoples to study national policies, practices, and funding programs on Indigenous media. The study aims to promote capacity-building and content production in Indigenous languages, fostering gender equality, international cooperation, and knowledge-sharing. It also aims to review measures taken by State-owned media and mainstream media to reflect Indigenous cultural diversity and ensure freedom of expression without prejudice. UNESCO is reaching out to Indigenous organizations,

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associations, networks, communities, and individuals to coordinate efforts. The findings will be presented at the UN Permanent Forum's annual session in 2025.

Promoting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and addressing any form of discrimination they are confronted with is an integral part of efforts to implement UNESCO's Roadmap against Racism and Discrimination. Within that context, several activities took place that either focus on Indigenous Peoples or have their perspectives integrated in a visible way. In this respect, UNESCO's Art-Lab for Human Rights and Dialogue developed a communication strategy focused on highlighting the influential role of the arts in addressing the pressing issue of climate change. This collaborative project aims to conduct interviews with Indigenous leaders and artists, with the primary objective of bringing to the fore their traditional knowledge while safeguarding their cultural rights. The project also entails mapping and documentation of tangible practices within the Amazon Rainforest. Through this initiative, the Art-Lab aims to amplify the voices of Indigenous communities, emphasizing their invaluable contribution to climate change mitigation and resilience through their profound connection with the environment. Notably, this project directly contributes to the outcomes 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10 of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022 - 2032) and is conducted as a Participatory Action Research endeavour.

In June-September 2023, UNESCO organized a series of Regional Expert Consultations on Intercultural Competencies for Peacebuilding as part of the "The Road to Peace: Dialogue and Action for Tolerance and Intercultural Understanding" program. The goal was to explore how intercultural competencies could promote peace in fragile, conflict-affected, and post-conflict contexts. The initiative will result in a guide on using intercultural competencies for peacebuilding, featuring regional best practices and expert recommendations for Member States. Indigenous Peoples representatives from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and the Pacific took part in the consultations.

In Asia and the Pacific, participants emphasized the importance of involving Indigenous Peoples in peacebuilding efforts, lamenting the lack of engagement with their customs and rituals. They highlighted Indigenous conflict resolution methods and called for empowering Indigenous Peoples to develop their peacebuilding frameworks. In North America, participants stressed the need to focus on Indigenous Peoples' culture, spirituality, and dignity, emphasizing cultural humility and transformational learning for reconciliation. Latin America and the Caribbean discussions centered on the rights and needs of Indigenous Peoples, with experts from Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico. They highlighted the region's challenges rooted in the colonial legacy, historical injustices, and attempts at cultural assimilation. Experts emphasized inclusive education, recognizing multiple worldviews, and understanding Indigenous Peoples' expectations and culture as potential solutions to address these challenges.

Two Rarámuri athletes participated in the 7th International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS VII), held in Baku, Azerbaijan in June 2023. In addition, a dedicated side event on the Rarámuri Legion Ultramarathon Series was organized on 28 June 2023 to showcase this initiative with the aim to strengthen international cooperation to preserve the natural, cultural, and sports heritage of the Rarámuri communities of Mexico.

UNESCO and the Lorena Ramirez Foundation co-organized an event in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, at the border with the United States of America, to celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous knowledge in relation to climate change has also been highlighted in the UNESCO Management of Social Transformations programme (MOST). The MOST-BRIDGES coalition for Sustainability Science, drawing on expertise from the humanities, social sciences, arts and educational disciplines, as well as indigenous knowledge, paves the way for transformative societal actions required to mitigate pressing global challenges such as anthropogenic climate change and biodiversity loss. At the heart of these efforts is the *Múnekañ Masha* ('let it be (re)born'), a transdisciplinary, collaborative, ecological restoration project, endorsed by the UNESCO BRIDGES Coalition. The project supports its Indigenous partners, the Kogi People in Colombia, to include their traditional practices in land management methods. It also seeks to enhance the capacity of academia to collaborate with these communities to co-produce methods for ecosystem restoration and land co-management.

ii. The theme of the 2024 PFII session is “Enhancing Indigenous Peoples’ right to self-determination in the context of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – emphasizing the voice of Indigenous Youth. Please include information on any publications, projects, reports, or activities relevant to this theme.

UNESCO is actively engaged in initiatives aimed at breaking down the barriers and mitigating threats faced by youth on a global scale. These initiatives encompass various facets, including fostering youth participation in critical decision-making processes and providing platforms for them to voice their concerns. These concerns primarily revolve around pressing issues like biodiversity loss, conservation efforts, the consequences of climate change, and strategies for environmental remediation. A specific focus of these efforts is to offer support to Indigenous youth residing in proximity to Biosphere Reserves. By doing so, UNESCO aims to assist these young individuals in preserving their invaluable local and traditional knowledge regarding biodiversity, such as in Kenya in 2023. This approach not only seeks to empower youth but also ensures the safeguarding of vital Indigenous knowledge in the context of biosphere conservation and protection.

The MLE WG’s guidance note published by UNESCO during COVID-19 pandemic,¹ described that learners from Indigenous and ethnolinguistic minority backgrounds face compounded disadvantages to enrolling and staying in school including remoteness, poverty, language barriers, lack of appropriate emergency materials, seasonal and permanent migration, perceived costs of mother tongue-based instruction, teacher attrition and widening of existing gaps. As a follow-up to these observations and with the global focus on digitalization of education, the MLE WG has been preparing a report on the digitalization of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE). The paper aims to highlight the potential challenges and opportunities in providing access to quality digital learning for learners from Indigenous and ethnolinguistic

¹ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375504>

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minority groups via 5 key entry points: access channels, learning materials, teaching strategies and teacher training, monitoring, assessment and data collection, and family and community engagement. For each entry point, Asia-Pacific country examples and general recommendations are presented. The report is essential for Indigenous youth and their Indigenous languages in education and beyond as all domains of life will be increasingly digitalized and must be inclusive and equitable for Indigenous Peoples.

The UNESCO Bangkok Office, in collaboration with Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact and Asia Indigenous Youth Platform, is implementing the Hooked-on Peace initiative, funded by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to create and archive digital stories and media in Indigenous Languages for awareness and education. 23 Indigenous youth representing 17 communities from 10 countries have been involved in training sessions and will also be involved in the content creation processes.

UNESCO has partnered with Brazilian author Victor Santos to co-publish “What makes us human”, an illustrated book about languages for young audiences. The book raises awareness about the preservation of Indigenous languages and promotes the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. It will be available in 19 languages, including in Mapuzungun / Spanish (Chile), Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Asturian and Basque (Spain), and English (North America and the United Kingdom), and French (Canada).

iii. Please provide information on efforts to ensure the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the international decades declared by the General Assembly, such as the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development,” the International Decade of Indigenous Languages and other relevant international decades and processes, including CEDAW General recommendation 39 on Indigenous women and girls.

The Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages of the International Decade was established to advise on the implementation of the Global Action Plan for the IDIL (2022-2032). The Global Task Force includes UNESCO Member States, Indigenous peoples' leaders, and representatives from United Nations system entities. In September 2023, UNESCO launched an Open Call for Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Peoples' Organizations to designate representatives for the Task Force, considering principles like multistakeholder engagement, geographical balance, gender equality, inclusivity, and linguistic diversity. In line with the Terms of Reference and Internal Rules of the Global Task Force, the nomination process for each region should be established by Indigenous Peoples' organizations and institutions.

Considering the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, the UNESCO 2023 **International Mother Language Day (21 February)** was celebrated on the theme ‘multilingual education - a necessity to transform education.’ The Day addressed crisis contexts, emergency situations, and language loss by supporting the right to quality, equitable and

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inclusive education for all, including population groups who are excluded from education. Among them are Indigenous Peoples.

In order to ensure a meaningful and effective participation of Indigenous representatives in the Steering Committee of the International Decade on Indigenous Languages (IDIL), a meeting was organized by the UNESCO Kathmandu office with the following Indigenous organizations: Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) Language Commission, Indigenous Nationalities Commission, Tribhuvan University, Nepal National Commission for UNESCO, National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN). The meeting ensured that the representatives of these organizations are included as steering committee members for the formulation of National Action Plans for the IDIL. Moreover, multiple rounds of consultation meetings, focused on how to advance the development of a national action plan to tailor the IDIL to the national context, took place, culminating in the final session organized by the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Government of Nepal.

In addition, UNESCO supported National Indigenous Women Forum to organize a national conference to strengthen capacity of Indigenous women parliamentarians on Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and IDIL. A commitment paper was released during the closing ceremony of the conference in the presence of the Honorable Vice President of Nepal.

UNESCO LINKS played a key role in improving synergies between UN Decades, to help Indigenous Peoples participate and overall improve stakeholder engagement. UNESCO LINKS worked with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (UNESCO IOC) to design a user's guide to help Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) holders participate effectively in the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (Ocean Decade). It emphasizes collaboration and inclusion, especially of ILK holders in remote communities and smaller organizations. The Guide offers clear information on the Ocean Decade's structure, entry points, and benefits of involvement for ILK holders, as well as strategies for integrating ILK into sustainable ocean science and management practices. UNESCO presented the components and opportunities for Indigenous Peoples engagement in the Ocean Decade at the 1st Pacific Islands Conference on Ocean Science and Ocean Management in Nadi, Fiji, in September 2023.

In March 2023, UNESCO LINKS organized a significant Official Event in New York during the UN Water Conference, with co-sponsorship and support from Australia, Bolivia, Burundi, Canada, Chad, Chile and Mexico, among others (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385789>). The event showcased the contributions of Indigenous Peoples worldwide and involved numerous UN Agencies, including UNDP, UNEP, UNFCCC and the WHO. It featured case studies from Indigenous Peoples in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and the Pacific, emphasizing the vital role of Indigenous knowledge and research in water management. Government and UN agencies' representatives highlighted the need for collaboration and shared responsibility in achieving sustainable water management. This event followed up on the Declaration adopted at the Dushanbe Conference in June 2022 during the Second High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action - "Water for Sustainable Development (2018-2028)." The Declaration recognized the importance of Indigenous Peoples in water governance and management, especially in climate-resilience water and sanitation

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management, within specific national contexts. It also emphasized a human rights-based approach.

Looking ahead, the 10th World Water Forum in Bali, Indonesia, in May 2024 is one of the crucial events in the area of water. UNESCO Eco-Hydrology and LINKS have contributed to draft thematic and high-level sessions that include Indigenous Peoples' perspectives on water management, submitted for approval during the second consultation meeting in Bali in October 2023. This contribution aims to maintain the momentum for recognizing Indigenous Peoples' rights in water management and self-determination.

The Indigenous and Local Knowledge Support Unit for the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES Net), hosted by UNESCO, supported National Ecosystem Assessments (NEA) in Azerbaijan, Botswana, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Malawi and Thailand. Through UNESCO support over 800 knowledge holders were engaged in NEA process. In addition, Colombia, Kenya and Nigeria are being supported for the uptake of either NEA or IPBES assessments. This contributes to the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

UNESCO LINKS also provided policy briefs on Indigenous and local knowledge, and its inclusion in the UN decades related to Ecosystem Restoration, Ocean, and Languages, at the request of both CARICOM and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

In September 2023, The UN General Assembly has adopted, by consensus, a resolution proclaiming the period 2024-2033 as the International Decade of Science for Sustainable Development (IDSSD). UNESCO is the lead agency for the IDSSD and in the initial design of the process, UNESCO and international science agencies and networks have agreed that Indigenous Knowledge will be recognized as an integral part of the Decade. UNPFII will be invited to engage further on the modality of governance of the Decade which began in 2024.

iv. [Has your entity responded to the 2022 UNPFII recommendation² paragraph 85... *The Permanent Forum urges all United Nations entities and States parties to treaties concerning the environment, biodiversity and the climate to eliminate the use of the term “local communities” in conjunction with indigenous peoples, so that the term “indigenous peoples and local communities” would be abolished.*](#)

[If yes, please explain your response in further detail.](#)

UNESCO has responded to the letter of the three Chairs of the United Nations mechanisms related to Indigenous Peoples. The response highlighted that UNESCO is a UN organization that operates based on instruments and mandates determined by its Member States, with a commitment to inclusivity and responsiveness to evolving global needs. In the framework of its mandates, an important portion of UNESCO's instruments and initiatives are specifically designed to address the multifaceted concerns of Indigenous Peoples, in alignment with the UNDRIP. These initiatives, such as the UNESCO Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples, the International Decade on Indigenous Languages, and the Intersectoral Programme on

² E/2022/43-E/C.19/2022/11

Promoting Indigenous Knowledge, Culture, and Languages as a Pathway to Inclusion (IP3), as well as a dedicated section (Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems - LINKS) with a dedicated Regular Programme Performance Indicator (and budget), highlight UNESCO's dedication to promoting the rights, languages, traditional knowledge, well-being, and cultural heritage of Indigenous communities. UNESCO strives to ensure that the voices of Indigenous Peoples are not only heard but also respected and fully integrated into national, regional, and global initiatives, fora, and policies. This commitment to addressing Indigenous Peoples' issues underscores UNESCO's core mission of fostering inclusivity and responding to the ever-changing global landscape.

B. System-Wide Action Plan to achieve the ends of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Background

As per the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/69/2), a [system-wide action plan to ensure a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) was adopted in November 2015 and launched by the Secretary-General at the UN Permanent Forum in May 2016.

In August 2020, the United Nations Executive Committee agreed on the need for accelerated and collective action to strengthen the implementation of the SWAP on indigenous peoples. In November 2020, the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination issued a [Call to Action: Building an Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Future with Indigenous Peoples](#). Its goal is to ensure collaborative and coherent UN system action to support the rights and well-being of indigenous peoples with a focus on furthering the implementation of the SWAP³.

i. The Permanent Forum will follow up on progress made on the SWAP implementation as part of its discussion on the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples during its 2024 session. Please provide an analysis of actions taken by your agency, fund and/or programme on the six key elements of the SWAP, since your last update to the Forum⁴.

Throughout 2022 and 2023, UNESCO has been co-Chair of the Inter-Agency Support Group (IASG) on Indigenous Peoples' issues, along with UNDESA which is the permanent Chair. UNESCO has been leading efforts by IASG to define further actions to implement the SWAP

³ Reporting on the activities to implement the CEB Call to Action is through task groups and should not be included in the responses to this questionnaire.

⁴ The six key elements of the SWAP are: 1) Raise awareness of the UNDRIP; 2) Support the implementation of the UNDRIP, particularly at the country level; 3) Support the realization of indigenous peoples' rights in the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; 4) Map existing standards and guidelines, capacity, training materials and resources within the UN system, international financial institutions and the members of the IASG for the effective implementation of the UNDRIP; 5) Develop the capacity of States, indigenous peoples, civil society and UN personnel; and 6) Advance the participation of indigenous peoples in UN processes.

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and in 2023, following the adoption of the IASG report to the UN High Level Committee on Programmes, UNESCO has facilitated a Working Group on the development of an Indicator Framework (also called and Accountability Framework) for the SWAP. This work was presented to the 22nd session of the UNPFII. A draft Indicator Framework should be available for discussion at the end of 2023. The Working Group used the models of the SWAP Indicator Frameworks for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW), Youth and Disability. The Indicator Framework uses the UNDRIP and the SWAP as the normative framework for accountability and reporting.

In line with articles 13.1 and 14.3 of the UNDRIP, 50% of the Regular Programme Budget of UNESCO Bangkok office under Education sector Output 1 was allocated to its multilingual education programme as a Secretariat of the MLE WG to 1) promote positive policies and practices on multilingual education; 2) strengthen knowledge and information about multilingual education; and 3) strengthen networks and partnerships. Among various initiatives, the following have contributed to the SWAP key elements:

- Support the realization of Indigenous Peoples' rights in the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – see High-Level Policy Forum on Multilingual Education below.
- Advance the participation of Indigenous Peoples in UN processes – see participation of Indigenous Peoples in discussion on MLE Conference.

The IPBES Technical Support Unit on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (TSU-ILK), hosted at UNESCO, has taken actions on elements 3) and 5) of the SWAP. For element 3), it supported the realization of Indigenous Peoples' rights in the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda, by organizing throughout 2023 regional and global ILK dialogues when undertaking assessments on critical themes for sustainable development and climate change, including on the thematic assessment of the interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food and health, the transformative change assessment, and the Business and biodiversity assessment. On element 5), the IPBES TSU-ILK developed the capacity of States, Indigenous Peoples, civil society and UN personnel by advocating through the production of materials for Indigenous Peoples and local communities regarding the IPBES Assessment Report on the Sustainable Use of Wild Species.

In terms of supporting the development of capacity of States, civil society, and UN Personnel, IPBES published a Summary for Policymakers for the Invasive Alien Species' assessment in August 2023, providing options for actions. The Thematic Assessment of Invasive Alien Species and their Control is the result of four years of work by 86 experts from 49 countries and synthesizes information from over 13,000 references into a comprehensive scientific assessment and concise summary document for policy makers. This report contained significant ILK content following the IPBES approach to ILK. Members of Indigenous Peoples and local communities contributed their time and knowledge as authors, fellows, review editors.

UNESCO, through its regional Bureau for Sciences in Latin America and the Caribbean (Montevideo Office), is in the final stages of publishing a significant outcome document stemming from a series of intercultural dialogues it organized. These dialogues brought together Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent, and the IberoMAB network. Six dialogue

meetings were conducted, involving approximately 300 participants from 26 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. One of the major achievements of these dialogues is the development of an action framework for implementing UNESCO's policy on engaging with Indigenous Peoples in biosphere reserves in Latin America and the Caribbean. This document serves as a practical demonstration of how UNESCO's policy documents can be translated into tangible actions. Notably, UNESCO's approach places Indigenous Peoples in a leadership role, following the principle of "nothing about us without us." This ensures that the process and its implementation are led by Indigenous Peoples, underscoring the commitment to an Indigenous-led approach.

C. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

i. Please describe any activities your entity has organized since the last reporting period to accelerate progress across a range of SDGs, demonstrating the interlinkages across goals and targets and if applicable, providing examples of translating global goals into local actions. In your response, please consider referring to SDGs relevant to the theme of the 2024 session of the Forum.

The MLE Working Group organizes the International Conference on Language and Education, known as the MLE Conference, every three years. This event brings together diverse stakeholders, including government officials, Indigenous Peoples, academics, youth, implementers, and more, to exchange ideas, best practices, and experiences, and to engage in dialogues about issues, challenges, and opportunities related to first language-based multilingual education and language-in-education.

The 7th edition of this conference took place from 4 to 6 October 2023, and gathered more than 450 participants from over 45 countries. The primary focus was on multilingual education for transformative education systems and resilient futures, with a specific sub-theme addressing education and the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, emphasizing the importance of Indigenous languages, cultures, and knowledge in education. In alignment with the commitment to inclusivity, Indigenous Peoples played a significant role throughout the conference, from the coordination process and the Steering Committee to reviewing presentation abstracts. They were also featured prominently in the conference program, serving as parallel session speakers and moderators. In 2023, the conference included a plenary speaker who discussed Indigenous languages in education as part of the sub-theme. Key highlights of the conference include:

- Approximately 30% of accepted abstracts were related to the sub-theme of education and Indigenous languages, cultures, and knowledge.
- At least 30% of presenters and panelists represented Indigenous and ethnolinguistic minority backgrounds.
- A panel of Indigenous youth discussed their initiatives in preserving and promoting traditional practices and languages.
- Ms. Rita Lasimbang, Chief Executive Officer of the Kadazandusun Language Foundation (KLF), served as a plenary speaker, emphasizing the significance of

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Indigenous languages in education, drawing from experiences in Malaysia and the active involvement of Indigenous Peoples in all stages of the educational process.

- Support was provided for the participation of 28 presenters and panelists from Indigenous and ethnolinguistic minority backgrounds.

The thematic assessment of the interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food and health examines the interlinkages among the sustainable development goals related to food and water security, health for all, protecting biodiversity on land and in the oceans and combating climate change. The Indigenous and local knowledge dialogue on the first draft of the chapters of the nexus assessment took place in Chiang Mai, Thailand (17 to 19 January 2023). The Third indigenous and local knowledge dialogue workshop for the nexus assessment was held in Montreal, Canada (28 to 30 November 2023).

The transformative change assessment is a thematic assessment of the underlying causes of biodiversity loss, determinants of transformative change and options for achieving the 2050 vision for biodiversity. Its objective would be to understand and identify factors in human society at both the individual and collective levels, including behavioral, social, cultural, economic, institutional, technical and technological dimensions, that may be leveraged to bring about transformative change for the conservation, restoration and wise use of biodiversity, while taking into account broader social and economic goals in the context of sustainable development. The Indigenous and local knowledge dialogue on scenarios of the future and the IPBES assessment of transformative change was held in Leticia, Colombia (13 to 16 February 2023), and the third indigenous and local knowledge dialogue for the transformative change assessment was held in Agadir, Morocco, in December 2023.

The Business and Biodiversity Assessment, also known as the “methodological Assessment of the Impact and Dependence of Business on Biodiversity and Nature’s Contributions to People”, aims at categorizing how businesses depend on, and impact, biodiversity and nature’s contributions to people and identifying criteria and indicators for measuring that dependence and impact, taking into consideration how such metrics can be integrated into other aspects of sustainability. The first indigenous and local knowledge dialogue for the business and biodiversity assessment was organized in Bogota, Colombia (23-24 September 2023).

ii. Please describe any activities your entity organized in support of the 2023 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and SDG Summit and/or reports and activities that supported SDG reporting and monitoring or a VNR process at the national, regional, or global level.

In parallel with the International Conference on Language and Education, the MLE WG coordinates the closed-door, by-invitation-only High-Level Policy Forum on Multilingual Education (HLPF) to convene government officials from the Asia-Pacific region to discuss success, challenges and ways forward in first language-based multilingual education (L1 MLE) policies and practices.

The 4th HLPF took place on 5 October 2023 and 20 country delegates discussed status updates on L1 MLE policies and practices since 2019 when the 3rd HLPF occurred where attending

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country delegates endorsed the outcome document, the Bangkok Statement on Language and Inclusion. The 33 country delegates from 20 countries in the Asia-Pacific region (Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Cook Islands, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam), which are part of the HLPF, emphasized the connection between the learning crisis, with an estimated 70% of children not being able to read and understand a simple sentence by the age of 10, and achieving the SDGs by 2030, particularly 4.1.1 (minimum proficiency level in reading by end of primary education) and 4.5.2 (language of instruction as learners' first or home language). Language plays a crucial role in achieving SDG 4, especially the first languages of Indigenous and ethnolinguistic minority learners who cannot learn and progress through education if they do not understand the language of instruction at school.

Recognizing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to accelerate progress toward SDG 4 on education, country delegates endorsed the Bangkok Priorities for Action on First Language-Based Multilingual Education. The Bangkok Priorities build upon the Bangkok Statement on Language and Inclusion to address the learning crisis, accelerate learning and transform education systems with learners' first languages. Some of the Priorities include:

- Quality MLE research, including language mapping and data disaggregated by language
- Budget allocation for MLE
- Effective MLE policies
- Quality MLE materials (print and digital)
- Formative and summative assessments for MLE learners
- Teacher recruitment and training for MLE

In particular, the priority on data collection will work toward SDG 4.5.2 reporting. One priority under partnerships with relevant stakeholders specifies promoting the value of local languages, cultures and knowledges with Indigenous and ethnic minority communities in safeguarding local knowledge, building resilience and developing social-emotional learning (SEL) across sectors that contributes to lifelong learning for the whole community.

Reminder: Please also include an [executive summary](#) of your inputs to the 3 main questions above (strict 500-word limit) which will be used for our compilation report submitted to the 2024 session of the PFII.

UNESCO has a Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples which aligns with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. From 2022, UNESCO entered into a new 8-Year Medium Term Strategy where Indigenous Peoples feature prominently as partners, knowledge holders and custodians of languages and culture. UNESCO works to mainstream Indigenous Peoples issues into each of its mandates, notably in Education, Culture, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, Communications and Information and in Oceanography. UNESCO is engaged to ensure that recommendations from the UNPFII are studied and acted on, as well as ensuring that Indigenous Peoples are key partners in achieving the SDGs.

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UNESCO contributed to advancing the rights of Indigenous Peoples within the 2030 Agenda, including SDGs 4, 6, 13, 14, and 15.

UNESCO is the lead Agency for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL), and work to enable the functioning of the Global Task Force, as well as support all initiatives to elaborate National Action Plans for the Decade. A Multilingual Education Working Group mapped language policies in 46 Asia-Pacific countries, revealing challenges in implementing first language-based multilingual education. Regarding Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, UNESCO supported Indigenous-led research in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean. UNESCO, in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, addressed various urgent topics, including cultural heritage, climate change, language revitalization, the digital divide and access to media.

UNESCO actively supports Indigenous youth's self-determination, addressing global challenges like biodiversity loss and climate change. Initiatives include preserving Indigenous knowledge in and near UNESCO designated sites and promoting inclusive digital education for Indigenous learners. Collaboration with Indigenous organizations focuses on studying national policies for Indigenous media. UNESCO co-published an illustrated book on languages for youth, highlighting Indigenous language preservation. Efforts to ensure Indigenous Peoples' participation in international decades involved task forces, celebrations, consultations, and support for women's forums. UNESCO LINKS facilitates Indigenous engagement in the Decades of Ocean Science, on Water Action and Ecosystem Restoration. UNESCO is the lead agency for the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (2024-2033), where Indigenous Knowledge will feature as one of the cornerstones.

In 2023, UNESCO worked to revise the 1974 Recommendation concerning education for international understanding, co-operation and peace, with a specific focus on Indigenous Peoples and their languages. Multiple countries aligned their educational programs with UNESCO's support for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) by 2030. UNESCO also launched an initiative to address the vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples' right to education in the face of adverse effects from climate change.

Experts from Indigenous communities actively contributed to UNESCO's Framework for Culture and Arts Education, emphasizing the inclusion of Indigenous languages and cultural heritage. UNESCO promoted guidelines highlighting the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including free, prior, and informed consent, within the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. The Organization pursued various thematic initiatives related to intangible cultural heritage and Indigenous participation, along with discussions on the return and restitution of cultural property.

ANNEX 1

Agenda of the twenty-second session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

The Twentieth-second session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is scheduled to take place from **15 to 26 April 2024**

Provisional Agenda

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Discussion on the theme “Enhancing Indigenous Peoples’ right to self-determination in the context of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: emphasizing the voices of Indigenous youth”.
4. Discussion on the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum (economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health and human rights), with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
5. Dialogues:
 - (a) Dialogue with Indigenous Peoples; E/2023/43 E/C.19/2023/7 23-08492 5/24
 - (b) Dialogue with Member States;
 - (c) Dialogue with the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes;
 - (d) Human rights dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; annual review of progress on the implementation of general recommendation No. 39 (2022);
 - € Regional dialogues;
 - (f) Dialogue on Indigenous platforms established within United Nations entities;
 - (g) Thematic dialogues, including on the financing of Indigenous Peoples’ work and participation in the context of, inter alia, development, climate, environment and biodiversity.
6. Future work of the Permanent Forum, including issues considered by the Economic and Social Council, the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and emerging issues.
7. Provisional agenda of the twenty-fourth session of the Permanent Forum.
8. Adoption of the report of the Permanent Forum on its twenty-third session. -