

DPPA-DPO inputs on activities undertaken in 2024 regarding Indigenous Peoples' issues

Executive summary (500-word limit)

During the period under review, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs remained engaged with the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and its Secretariat, DESA/Indigenous Branch. Regular exchanges with the UNPFII, as well as with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, enhanced DPPA's analysis of conflict trends involving Indigenous Peoples, and strengthened the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in all UN efforts to support political dialogue, mediation and build sustainable peace.

The DPPA-DPO/Americas Division is the departmental focal point on Indigenous issues. Building on the expertise of the new Chairperson of the UNPFII, Ms. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, the Americas Division is seeking opportunities to support enhanced partnership on climate security issues between the UN system and the UNPFII.

During the period under review, the Americas Division engaged with the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), which held the First Global Summit on Indigenous Peacebuilding in April 2024, to support efforts promoting an Indigenous approach to peacebuilding. The Division has held regular meetings with the secretariat of the initiative, whose network includes several members of the UNPFII.

DPPA's work on the promotion of the political rights of Indigenous Peoples also encompassed electoral issues. The UN provides electoral assistance upon request from a Member State or in accordance with a Security Council/General Assembly Resolution. In conducting electoral needs assessment missions, DPPA regularly assesses the challenges and needs of Indigenous Peoples and their political participation. UN assistance, where appropriate and requested, is tailored to those needs.

The DPPA-Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), which works with local communities and civil society organizations, as well as the United Nations system, has also supported initiatives specifically designed to enhance the participation of Indigenous Peoples into peace processes.

A. Recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and input to the 2025 session.

The theme of the 2025 UNPFII session is "Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples within United Nations Member States and the United Nations system, including identifying good practices and addressing challenges."

In 2023, building on exchanges between the UNPFII and the Americas Division, DPPA used extra-budgetary resources to implement a pilot project reviewing the pillars of Indigenous governance structures in the Andean countries. This year, the Americas Division, in coordination with DPPA's Policy and Mediation Division, is finalizing an internal practice note identifying recommendations to guide DPPA's engagements on Indigenous issues. The project also raises awareness about the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework contributing to preventing and resolving conflicts involving Indigenous Peoples. A second phase of this initiative aims to focus on mediation processes involving Indigenous Peoples and identifying the needs of Indigenous and non-Indigenous mediators, supporting parties to design and participate in mediation processes.

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

The work of DPPA contributed to the implementation of the System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP) on Indigenous Peoples, especially through supporting national actors, including from civil society, in advancing the rights, inclusion and participation of Indigenous Peoples in political and peacebuilding processes.

The Americas Division, in support of one of the six elements of the SWAP (developing the capacity of States, Indigenous Peoples, civil society and UN personnel), continues to chair the DPPA-DPO Working Group on Indigenous Issues. The Working Group is an internal platform for knowledge exchange on Indigenous issues within departments. In the period under review, it held three meetings to discuss issues related to Indigenous Peoples, particularly those in the Americas, and Asia and the Pacific.

Furthermore, the Americas Division as well engaged with the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), which held the First Global Summit on Indigenous Peacebuilding in April 2024, to support efforts promoting an Indigenous approach to peacebuilding. The Division has held regular exchanges with the secretariat of the initiative, including a meeting with a delegation of Indigenous Elders, Leaders and Youth, who presented a signed copy of the "International Declaration on Indigenous Peacebuilding". In September, in support of another element of SWAP (advancing the participation of Indigenous Peoples in UN process), the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has continued to provide a space for representatives of Indigenous Peoples to share their experiences in peacebuilding. At a high-level PBC meeting on **Guatemala**, where President Arévalo presented his country's peacebuilding priorities, the Commission also heard from Ms. Feliciana Herrera, Indigenous Mayor of Nebaj, El Quiché, who emphasized the role of Indigenous Peoples in contributing to inclusive peacebuilding processes. At another high-level PBC meeting on **Colombia**, attended by President Petro, participants highlighted the need for the active participation of Indigenous Peoples in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, including by addressing their specific vulnerabilities.

Furthermore, six Indigenous civil society representatives are expected to attend the second annual **CSO-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding**, to be held at UNHQ in December 2024, co-chaired by the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and Interpeace. The CSO-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding seeks to create a platform for diverse civil society actors, especially from the Global South, to influence global peacebuilding policies and objectives to enable the UN to engage more systematically with civil society in its work building and sustaining peace. In the participant identification processes of both the inaugural annual Dialogue in 2023 and the upcoming 2024 Dialogue, affiliation with an Indigenous Peoples has been an important priority diversity-inclusion criterion.

C. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

During the period under review, DPPA highlights the following initiatives on Indigenous issues that are relevant for SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions).

Peacebuilding Fund

The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) supported several initiatives specifically designed to enhance the participation of Indigenous Peoples.

In **Colombia**, the Project “Intercultural Mae Kiwe (‘Mother Earth’)” implemented by Warchild (USD 1.7 million), focuses on safe and meaningful participation in political and peacebuilding processes of Afro-Descendant and Indigenous young women and men, while promoting Indigenous People’s right to life, physical and mental integrity and personal security. This project supported the establishment of Hubs in collaboration with organizations led by Indigenous youth, as spaces that provide a safe environment that facilitates the participation of young women from different territories. Young women who participate in these Hubs have co-created methodologies for sharing knowledge about intersectionality, gender, patriarchy, ethnicity, and Indigenous epistemologies. They also created mentorship programmes for other women in their communities with a focus on women roles in history, the concept of gender in the Nasa Indigenous Peoples, women and leadership in Indigenous territories, and gender-based violence prevention.

In 2024, the DPPA/PBSO’s Partnership Facility also supported the development of a proposal in **Colombia** aiming to support the implementation of the World Bank’s Multipurpose Cadaster project, which aligns with the 2016 Final Peace Agreement. The project will support Colombia’s main cadaster authority, IGAC, in addressing regulatory challenges around land tenure when implementing the Peace Agreement and includes a focus on Indigenous, Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal, Palenquero, and peasants’ territories. OHCHR will be added to the project’s steering committee to mitigate potential protection concerns and comply with the UN Secretary General’s guidance on mainstreaming human rights.

In **Guatemala**, a PBF funded project in the Polochic Valley, implemented by FAO, OHCHR and WFP (USD 1.5 million in its first phase) trained 582 Indigenous Q'eqchi leaders in 10 communities to strengthen their participation in the management of agrarian conflicts, as well as in land and food security governance mechanisms. The project “Consolidating infrastructures for sustaining peace” implemented by UNDP, UNESCO, UN Women (USD 1.5 million in its first phase), trained 73 Indigenous Mam and Ixil community leaders from Huehuetenango and Quiché in Conflict Transformation for a Peace Culture, and worked closely with Indigenous authorities in the Ixil region to increase women’s participation in local Indigenous institutions, as well as to improve capacities for the participation of men and women in consultations processes in accordance with international standards on the right to prior, free and informed consultation. This project also supported the Xinka Indigenous parliament in the consultation process for a mining project in Escobal. The PBF is also supporting Indigenous youth under a Youth Promotion Initiative project implemented by UNFPA, OHCHR, IOM (USD 1.5 million), to improve their agency and access to safe spaces for civic participation in local planning processes in two municipalities in Huehuetenango and four municipalities in Peten.

Electoral Assistance

The UN provides electoral assistance upon request from a Member State or a Security Council/General Assembly Resolution. In conducting electoral needs assessment missions, DPPA assesses the challenges and needs of Indigenous Peoples and their political participation. UN assistance, where appropriate and requested, is tailored to those needs.

In **Bolivia**, the UN is currently providing electoral assistance through the “*Culture of Peace and Strengthening of the Electoral Organs of Plurinational Bolivia*” electoral project. The project supports the qualification and participation of Indigenous organizations and representatives in national, departmental, and municipal elections through training and exchange events focused on the functions of the executive and legislative branches.

Since 2016, DPPA has annually deployed electoral experts to **New Caledonia** to accompany the updating of the special voter lists used in the provincial elections, as well as the preparations and organization of the three referenda held under the 1998 Nouméa Accord. The UN continues to promote dialogue and consensus in the political process regarding constitutional amendments about voter eligibility issues. New Caledonia’s Indigenous Kanaks have sought to maintain the Nouméa Accord’s restrictions on voter eligibility in favour of long term-residents.

Conflict prevention and sustaining peace activities

DPPA-DPO/Americas Division, building on the expertise of the new Chairperson of the UNPFII, Ms. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, is seeking opportunities to support enhanced partnership on climate security issues between the UN system and the UNPFII through the Climate Security Mechanism.

The **United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia** continued to monitor, in line with its mandate, the implementation of provisions of the “ethnic chapter” of the 2016 Final Peace

Agreement which seeks to grant priority attention, across all areas of the Peace Agreement, to Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations disproportionately affected by the conflict. In November 2024, the Government and State entities renewed their commitment to the chapter through a pact to complete at least 60 per cent of its implementation by 2026. The Government committed to take steps to reduce gaps between rural and urban areas through effectively incorporating the ethnic approach into the comprehensive rural reform; to safeguard the rights of communities and victims; and to guarantee political participation, and collective and individual security for ethnic peoples. The pact also includes commitments to advancing the chapter's gender-related provisions. Progress toward attaining those goals has remained limited across the nine areas that the Government has identified, including access to land, development programmes with a territorial focus (PDET) on ethnic territories, and the strengthening of self-protection mechanisms.

In **Guatemala**, DPPA, in collaboration with the Office of the Resident Coordinator and *Fundación Esquipulas* supported AI-powered digital dialogues on youth political participation to exchange perspectives on critical national issues, including the fight against corruption and electoral reform. Approximately 60 per cent of participants were women, and 40 per cent self-identified as Indigenous—a critical representation in a country where over 43 per cent of the population identifies as Indigenous.

In **Chile**, DPPA continued to support the Government's efforts to address the long-standing disputes between the Indigenous Mapuche People and the State. Expert support, mobilized via the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisors (SBT), included process design support and comparative expertise offered to the “Commission for Peace and Understanding” in Araucanía.

In **Libya**, the United Nations Support Mission (UNSMIL) continued to engage with the Amazigh, Tebu and Tuareg communities to seek their views on a political process that can enable national elections, solicit and convey their priority concerns to Libyan authorities regarding their political and social marginalization and around the provision of healthcare, education and other services, and enable the Mission to advocate for their active **political participation** and the importance of extending equitable rights, obligations and privileges to their communities. UNSMIL facilitated communication between the High National Elections Commission and representatives of Tebu and Tuareg communities towards an agreement on securing reserved seats in the 2024 municipal council elections.

UNSMIL engaged with members of the Tebu, Amazigh and Tuareg communities to better understand and promote their needs and demands related to a national **transitional justice** process, including regarding the right to a nationality. In Murzuq in southern Libya, UNSMIL supported **local reconciliation initiatives** between the Tebu and Ahaali communities which have led to launching the rebuilding of the city and the return of some of the internally displaced people. UNSMIL also continued to monitor, document and report on **human rights violations**, including those affecting Amazigh, Tebu and Tuareg communities. UNSMIL documented cases of enforced disappearances and other human rights violations committed in Murzuq between members of the Tebu and Ahaali groups between 2019 and 2022 and provided technical

assistance to support future forensics and mass graves investigations in and around the city. As part of its joint programme with UNDP on **missing persons**, UNSMIL supported the active participation of members of the Tebu, Amazigh and Tuareg communities in efforts to establish a national network of families of missing persons.