



**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND UNESCO'S ACTIONS 2024:  
INPUT TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE TWENTY-FOURTH  
SESSION (2025) OF THE UN PERMANENT FORUM ON  
INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

## Questionnaire to UN system

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### **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 2025 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.<sup>1</sup>

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

*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 2024** 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](mailto:indigenous_un@un.org)

Subject: Response to SWAP questionnaire

### **Questionnaire**

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<sup>1</sup> Indigenous should be capitalized when referring to cultures, communities, lands, languages, etc., of Indigenous Peoples, e.g.: Indigenous culture in Ecuador, Indigenous languages are dying out. If referring to flora or fauna, lower case should be used. See UN Editorial Manual for further guidance: <https://www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/editorial-manual/updates>

## Questionnaire to UN system

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Please also include an **executive summary** of your inputs to the 3 main questions below (strict 500-word limit) which will be used for our compilation report submitted to the 2025 session of the PFII.

**Please provide information on the following:**

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

*Recommendations on Indigenous Languages (Para 17 of the 2019 UNPFII report at its 18<sup>th</sup> session) (Para 27 of the 2022 UNPFII report at its 21<sup>st</sup> session), and (Para 123 of the 2024 UNPFII report at its 23<sup>rd</sup> session).*

- The Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages established 4 Ad-hoc groups to provide advice on specific aspects of the implementation of the Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, namely education, language and knowledge transmission, recognition and implementation of policy for Indigenous languages, and digital equality. The Ad-hoc groups consist of individual experts (about 20 per group) who represent their governments, Indigenous Peoples' institutions and organizations, academia, civil society and public and private organizations, and other stakeholders (both in personal and institutional capacity). These groups provide an essential medium through which expertise and best practices can be shared amongst individuals in the field. This is in line with the UNPFII Recommendation *E/2019/43-E/C.19/2019/10, paragraph 17*, which invites "stakeholders [to] share initiatives and strategies undertaken for, with and by Indigenous Peoples in order to recover, use and revitalize Indigenous languages, including through the use of information and communication technologies." (*Recommendation: E/2019/43-E/C.19/2019/10, paragraph 17*).
- UNESCO has increased the engagement of Indigenous youth in the International Decade of Indigenous Languages by including Indigenous youth speakers in flagship events and in the Ad-hoc groups established by the Global Task Force. This is in line with the UNPFII recommendation to engage Indigenous youth in decision-making processes (*E/2024/43-E/C.19/2024/8, paragraph 123*).
- UNESCO continues to actively support the development of National, Regional and Institutional Action Plans for Indigenous Languages. These plans outline governments' strategic approaches to advance the goals of the International Decade over a ten-year period and are tailored to national contexts while aligning with the Global Action Plan. As of October 2024, 14 National Action Plans and 3 Regional and Institutional Action Plans have been finalized, with 18 Actions Plans currently under development. The guidance of the implementation on the National Action Plans is a continuous effort which is aligned with the UNPFII's recommendation that member-states, in cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, issue their action plans by the end of 2022, and that they subsequently monitor their implementation (*E/2022/43-E/C.19/2022/11, paragraph 27*).

*Recommendation on Indigenous Media (Para 10 of 2023 UNPFII report at its 22<sup>nd</sup> session)*

Following the recommendation of the UNPFII underlining the need for the examination of national policies, practices and funding programmes on Indigenous Peoples in media, UNESCO was mandated by the UNPFII, in partnership with UN relevant entities and Indigenous Peoples

(E/2023/43-E/C.19/2023/7, paragraph 10), to undertake a study and present the outcomes at its 24<sup>th</sup> session in 2025. As part of the study, UNESCO has invited Indigenous-led media organizations to take part in a global survey designed to gather data on the state of media at the service of Indigenous Peoples. The survey was conducted over a period of six months, from July to November 2024. An additional survey was initiated in October 2024 and remained open until the end of December 2024, with the objective of gathering more detailed data pertaining to activities related to Indigenous Peoples and the media. This initiative aims to assess how Indigenous-led media uphold Indigenous Peoples' rights to freedom of expression and access to public information, while promoting diversity of opinion, peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding in society. An expert meeting and media partnership forum on Indigenous Peoples and the Media took place on 26 and 27 November 2024 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The event brought together 26 Indigenous-led media and mainstream media from 18 countries, including public broadcasters and community media, with the objective of developing proposals for advancing the implementation of Article 16 on media of the UNDRIP, as a part of the study. They study's findings will be presented at the Permanent Forum's annual session in 2025.

*Recommendation on FPIC (Para 24 of the 2023 UNPFII report at its 22<sup>nd</sup> 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), the following actions have been implemented:*

*Joint Programme of Work on the Links between Biological and Cultural Diversity:*

In 2024, UNESCO's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) Programme expanded its collaborative efforts with Indigenous Peoples through consultations on the Joint Programme of Work on the Links between Biological and Cultural Diversity (JPoW). These consultations took place at key events throughout the year:

- **United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)** – April 2024: UNESCO LINKS engaged with Indigenous representatives at the UNPFII, gathering input on the Joint Programme of Work's priorities and approaches to ensure that Indigenous voices shape policies linking biological and cultural diversity.
- **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Task Force on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK)** – June 2024: During a session with the IPBES Task Force on ILK, consultations highlighted the importance on strengthening Indigenous knowledge systems' role within biodiversity assessments and conservation strategies.
- **Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)** – July 2024: At EMRIP 17<sup>th</sup> session, UNESCO LINKS held consultations to explore how Indigenous rights intersect with biodiversity conservation, cultural heritage and Indigenous languages. Feedback from Indigenous representatives was gathered to align the Joint Programme of Work with rights-based approaches and prioritize equitable resource management.
- **World Heritage Committee Meeting** – End of July 2024: In close cooperation with the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on World Heritage (IIPFWH), UNESCO LINKS programme and the World Heritage Center organized a preparatory consultation meeting on 20 July, ahead of the World Heritage Committee in New Delhi, India. This workshop brought together Indigenous partners, stakeholders from the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, representatives of the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee, and other key stakeholders. Discussions emphasized the importance of safeguarding Indigenous cultural heritage within the context of biodiversity conservation. Indigenous stakeholders contributed perspectives on how World Heritage sites can better integrate both biological and cultural dimensions, enhancing protection of sites significant to them. The results of these four consultation meetings with Indigenous Peoples led to the initiation of a roadmap for the implementation of the JPoW which was shared at the COP 16 in

## Questionnaire to UN system

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Colombia in October 2024. This roadmap aims at promoting Indigenous Peoples' participation in conservation discussions, decisions and policies, and recognizing their customary laws, and their role as custodians of nature engaged in site-based and place-based conservation and sustainable use.

### *Global Biodiversity Assessments:*

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, continued its work with authors of IPBES assessments and Indigenous Peoples to ensure that work with Indigenous knowledge and participation by Indigenous Peoples is central to IPBES assessments.

The TSU-ILK also organized dialogues on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) for IPBES assessments, as part of the IPBES approach to recognizing and working with ILK:

- **Business and biodiversity:** A second dialogue workshop in the context of the external review of the assessment, at a San-owned cultural centre near Cape Town, South Africa, from 31 July to 2 August 2024.
- **Scoping of the second global assessment:** An online dialogue workshop (two sessions to cover different time zones) was organized in the context of the external review of the draft scoping report of the second global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services, on 5 June 2024.
- **Monitoring assessment:** An in-person dialogue workshop was organized for developing key Indigenous and local knowledge questions and concepts for the monitoring assessment from 30 November to 1 December 2024.
- All completed dialogue workshop reports are available online at: <https://www.ipbes.net/ilk-dialogue-reports>.

Additionally, at the eleventh session of the IPBES Plenary in December 2024 in Windhoek, Namibia, two assessments will be approved: the assessment of interlinkages between biodiversity, water, food and health (the nexus assessment) and the assessment of transformative change – both assessments represent significant efforts to work with Indigenous and local knowledge and enhance participation by Indigenous Peoples, and contain significant findings related to Indigenous Peoples including co-produced figures and work with concepts in multiple Indigenous languages.

Furthermore, the UNESCO-based IPBES TSU-ILK created materials for Indigenous Peoples and organized a webinar for Indigenous Peoples related to the “*Thematic Assessment of Invasive Alien Species and their Control*” which are available at <https://www.ipbes.net/ilk-publication-resources>.

The IPBES TSU-ILK also continued the review of Indigenous and Local Knowledge in IPBES assessments, that was first completed in 2023, to also include an analysis of the assessment of Invasive Alien Species and their control.

### *National Ecosystem Assessments:*

The Indigenous and Local Knowledge Support Unit for the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES Net), hosted and led by UNESCO LINKS, supported the National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) Initiative that led in completion of NEAs in Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Cambodia in 2024 with the fair inclusion of Indigenous and local knowledge based on the IPBES conceptual framework. Also, Bosnia and Herzegovina published the English version of the publication on the “State of Traditional Knowledge of Biodiversity in Bosnia and Herzegovina” that will be launched in UNESCO Paris in the end of November 2024. Furthermore, throughout 2024, Botswana, Dominican Republic, Malawi and Thailand were supported to include Indigenous and local knowledge in their NEAs that are expected to be completed in 2025. In

addition, Colombia and Kenya are being supported for the uptake of either NEA or IPBES thematic assessments. This contributes to the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, pollinator conservation, and land degradation neutrality.

### *Synergies between UN Decades and transdisciplinary approaches*

There is a concerted effort to include Indigenous Peoples in the international decades declared by the UN, such as the Decades on Ecosystem Restoration, Ocean Science, Water Action, and Indigenous Languages and to promote synergies between the decades. UNESCO is the lead agency for the Indigenous Languages and Ocean Science Decades and has a contributing role in the Water Action and Ecosystems Restoration Decade. UNESCO has secured core principles for synergies across the conventions, while also working with the respective Secretariats on standards for effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and their representation in the governance of the Decades and UNESCO Conventions.

UNESCO's work in 2024 in different parts of the world mentioned in this questionnaire provides an excellent case study of how Indigenous knowledge, culture, and languages are being integrated into global efforts, including increased support to Indigenous Peoples participation in activities related to the Ocean Decade in April 2024, the Water Action Decade in May 2024, and the Ecosystem Restoration Decade in October 2024. Furthermore, UNESCO continues to advance practices on the application of Free Prior and Informed Consent in different areas and contexts. The activities include, among others, sharing of the findings of 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. This aims to improve the recognition of traditional practices and promote their inclusion in related national policies and plans, and facilitate collaboration between experts, policy-makers and Indigenous Peoples.

### *Recommendations related to Culture (Paras 78, 93, 116 & 146 of the 2024 UNPFII report at its 23rd session), 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 line with the *MONDIACULT Declaration*, adopted by the Ministers of Culture of UNESCO Member States in 2022, which calls for the promotion of 'an enabling environment conducive to the respect and exercise of cultural rights - individual and collective', and the expansion of the policy reflection on the cultural rights of Indigenous Peoples, in particular through an expert dialogue on cultural rights organised by Switzerland in April 2023 (in which a representative of the Permanent Forum participated as a panellist), policy discussions on collective cultural rights have taken place within the G20 Culture Working Group under Brazil's 2024 Presidency, particularly in relation to intellectual property and combating the misappropriation of Indigenous knowledge.

The *UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education*, adopted in February 2024 to support Member States in drawing on the broad spectrum of culture, including heritage, arts, creativity and language, as a source of knowledge and multiple skills and competencies, emphasizes the importance of safeguarding Indigenous knowledge systems and linguistic diversity, thereby contributing to the holistic, transformative and effective integration of culture and the arts in education, to quality learning outcomes and to the expansion of employment opportunities, including in the cultural sector. By fostering accessibility and promoting the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples, the UNESCO framework focuses on ensuring individual and societal well-being, thereby facilitating lifelong and lifewide learning opportunities that are culturally diverse, equitable and geared towards preparing learners for a just, peaceful and sustainable future.

Based on this new framework, UNESCO is supporting the integration of living heritage, including Indigenous languages and heritage, into primary schools in Southern Africa. Thanks to the generous support of Flanders (Belgium), activities are planned in 12 schools in Namibia and 12 schools in Zimbabwe. The 'whole school' approach ensures that all members of the educational community

(students, teachers, head teachers, etc.) and the surrounding communities are actively involved in linking elements of living heritage to different school subjects. For example, Indigenous songs and dances, traditional games and sports are integrated with art and physical education, while Indigenous concepts and knowledge about weather hazards and the environment are integrated with science, health education and other related subjects. Building on the results of the school-based activities, UNESCO is also working to scale up the approach and establish coordination mechanisms between the Ministries of Education and Culture to ensure that heritage-based education methodologies are embedded in national policies and enrich future teacher training and curriculum development in both countries. Another example of this approach is the Field School for Capacity-Building in Safeguarding the Living Heritage of Ethnic Communities project, supported by the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund in Thailand, which benefits six Indigenous communities living in protected forests and the Andaman Sea from the north to the south of Thailand. In Chile, a project supported by UNESCO and implemented by the University of Los Lagos in collaboration with the Bilingual Intercultural Education Programme of the Ministry of Education, is developing capacity building with traditional Mapuche educators to develop linguistic, cultural and pedagogical immersion experiences to strengthen their pedagogical and cultural skills.

With regard to Recommendation 78, in which the Permanent Forum calls upon African States and UNESCO to safeguard Indigenous Peoples' languages and [...] also encourages the development of initiatives to prioritise the knowledge systems of Indigenous Peoples, in particular for women and girls, UNESCO has continued to support the safeguarding of the living heritage of Indigenous Peoples through the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund, focusing on countries such as the Central African Republic, Mali, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru and Thailand. These initiatives cover a wide range of areas, including the inventorying of intangible cultural heritage, the development of safeguarding plans and the production of heritage-sensitive educational materials for schools.

UNESCO lists of intangible heritage continue to enrich with new elements of living heritage related to Indigenous Peoples, including Aklan piña handloom weaving (Aklanon people; The Philippines); intangible cultural heritage safeguarding practices programme for the cultural and ecologic Sea Turtle Festival of Armila (Kuna people; Panama); Sona, drawings and geometric figures on sand (Lunda Cokwe people, Angola); Ch'utillos, the Festival of San Bartolomé and San Ignacio de Loyola, the meeting of cultures in Potosí (Kichwa-speaking communities; Bolivia) and Ingoma Ya Mapiko (Makonde people; Mozambique). These inscriptions not only increase visibility and celebrate the cultural diversity and traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples but also provide a platform to shape international discourse and ensure that the experiences and needs of Indigenous Peoples are represented at the global level.

UNESCO continues to promote participatory and inclusive policy development processes to ensure that all voices are taken into account and all rights are respected, including those of local communities and Indigenous Peoples. The national consultations for the revision of the Cultural Policy Charter of São Tomé and Príncipe included two sessions in the Autonomous Region of Príncipe and in São Tomé, with the active participation of representatives of local and Indigenous communities, ensuring the inclusion of their needs and priorities in the new policy document, which aims to promote the development of the cultural sector and the safeguarding of cultural heritage.

With regard to Recommendation 146 on the repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains, UNESCO has increased the focus of the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation (ICPRCP) on Indigenous Peoples concerned, as evidenced by the participation of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) - Australia's only national institution focused on the history, culture and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians - at its 24th session in May 2024. In addition, UNESCO continues to work on the development of model provisions to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in cultural property with a view to assisting Member States in strengthening their operational and normative frameworks for the protection of movable cultural heritage. These provisions also address the protection of the

cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples and invite Member States to recognise and, where appropriate, apply special legal protection to their cultural heritage.

In line with the recommendations of the Permanent Forum, steps have been taken to ensure that Indigenous Peoples are recognised and involved in discussions on underwater cultural heritage. A mission to the Dominican Republic in May 2024 assessed potential shipwrecks and port sites in La Isabela Bay believed to be associated with Christopher Columbus. The mission, organised in close collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, involved a multidisciplinary team of 18 experts from different countries and highlighted the historical and cultural importance of the site, particularly in relation to the Indigenous narratives associated with these shipwrecks, the port area and the Taino village on the coast. With a special focus on Indigenous heritage, the assessment of La Isabela aims to raise awareness of the importance of underwater cultural heritage among policy-makers and stakeholders. UNESCO has also supported an underwater archaeological research project in the sacred Lake Titicaca in Bolivia, with a strong component of work and consultation with Indigenous Peoples to gather oral history information and engage with them in heritage conservation and protection. The results of the archaeological mission, inaugurated with an Indigenous ceremony to the Pachamama, were shared with the community in the local museum of Guaqui.

### *Recommendations related to education (Paras 29, 31 and 32 of the 2022 UNPFII report at its 21st session):*

*Interconnections between the Sustainable Development Goals and Indigenous languages, as well as the integration of gender equality principles:*

- In Viet Nam, UNESCO's work is supporting Indigenous children, particularly girls, to continue their education. The multi-year project has a strong focus on youth leadership, including communication and advocacy skills.
- Interactive webinars and workshops were held addressing Indigenous issues and emphasizing gender equality, inclusion and youth participation, encouraging diverse audience engagement including the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (9 August).
- In Viet Nam, UNESCO is partnering with UN Women, the Norwegian Football for All association to promote gender equality and safe learning environments through sports. Advocacy and coverage of sporting events reached millions in 2023 through online/television coverage and articles in nearly 30 national newspapers.

*Multilingual education:*

- The 2024 **International Mother Language Day** held in UNESCO Headquarters in February celebrated multilingual education and Indigenous languages. It aimed to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive quality education and lifelong learning and the objectives of the International Decade on Indigenous Languages (2022-2032). On this occasion, UNESCO set up a UNESCO/Purdue University Traineeship for Indigenous fellows.
- **International Literacy Day 2024 (ILD)** celebration (8 September) focused on "Promoting multilingual education: Literacy for mutual understanding and peace," including attention to Indigenous languages. ILD2024 sheds light on the transformative power of literacy to foster mutual understanding and peace in multilingual contexts, looking at relevant policies, programmes, practices, and governance, to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and beyond. While ILD is traditionally an occasion to promote literacy for all age groups, ILD2024 focused, in particular, on youth and adult literacy. As an outcome of the yearly celebration, the 'Sokola literacy education for Indigenous Indonesians' programme was one of the Laureates of the **UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy**. This programme is a blend of first-language instruction with national languages and ethnographic methods to preserve cultures and teach broader skills and reached out to 1,000 learners.
- UNESCO has also developed a series (<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-brazils-initiative-indigenous-linguistic-diversity-health-education>) of materials to support **Indigenous**



## Questionnaire to UN system

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**Linguistic Diversity in health education** in the Amazonas region, including 8 publications and 24 videos released in 2024 in multiple languages.

### *Academia and Chairs*

- UNESCO launched the UNESCO/Purdue University (USA) Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Indigenous language teaching and learning; set up a UNESCO/Purdue University Traineeship for Indigenous fellows and will have a UNESCO Chair on Capacity building within Indigenous and non-dominant language communities for rights and education established in the near future.

ii. The theme of the 2025 PFII 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." Please include information on any publications, projects, reports, or activities relevant to this theme.

### *Accountability Framework for the System-Wide Action Plan on Indigenous Peoples*

- UNESCO has played a leading role in the Inter-Agency Support Group (IASG) on the implementation of the System-Wide Action Plan on Indigenous Peoples (SWAP-IP). The SWAP is a key instrument to ensure that the UNDRIP is implemented through the UN system and entities across the planet. After a series of consultations with and reporting to the High-Level Committee on Programmes, the IASG agreed to develop an Accountability Framework to support the SWAP. UNESCO worked with OHCHR, UNDESA, WHO, IFAD, UN Women and WFP to draft an Accountability Framework that should be test run in 2025. This will require all UN Country Teams to develop baseline information on their implementation of the UNDRIP nationally, secure partnerships and communication with national Indigenous Peoples' representative bodies, and then develop a scorecard for their degree of implementation of UNDRIP. The implementation of this Accountability Framework will also apply to all UN entities and will have the effect of both making transparent the UN efforts at implementing UNDRIP, as well as setting targets and showing best practices.

### *International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032):*

- In July 2024, UNESCO published a "Guidance note on the development of National Action Plans for Indigenous Languages" to provide concrete guidelines to UNESCO Member State on how to localize the Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages to UNESCO Member States.
- In August 2024, UNESCO launched the drafting of an online publication titled "10 recipes for sustainable development, one common ingredient: Indigenous languages". This publication will serve as a practical guide, featuring innovative and inspiring projects undertaken by National Commissions for UNESCO to implement the abovementioned Global Action Plan, in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is scheduled to be published in early 2025. All 199 National Commissions for UNESCO have been invited to contribute to this publication by sharing their country's best practices in the preservation, revitalization and promotion of Indigenous languages.
- As the framework of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages is multi-disciplinary and cross-cutting, UNESCO is working with other UN agencies, namely UNDESA, OHCHR, IFAD, FAO, WIPO, UN Women and UNGEGN, to address all thematic areas of the Global Action Plan. An inter-agency meeting dedicated to the International Decade of Indigenous Languages was held in July 2024 to explore further collaboration possibilities, including the translation of recommendations in Indigenous languages and UN involvement in IDIL events.

### *Education*

The UNESCO Initiative on the *Evolving Right to Education* is considering how minority rights (and Indigenous rights when they are minorities) could be better protected. This initiative ensures that

the monitoring mechanism of the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education and that of the new 1974 Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development integrate provision for Indigenous Peoples' education. It is important to note that the new text of the Recommendation has provisions on three main areas:

- On pedagogy and curriculum which enhance the diversity of knowledge systems, ways of expression, transmission and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, through the valorization of all languages, notably **Indigenous languages and mother tongue languages, and the appreciation of diverse perspectives**.
- On learning and teaching materials that encourage the development of multilingual skills, including **Indigenous and mother tongue languages** and that are made available in compliance with applicable laws.
- On the development of teachers and education personnel, supporting opportunities for **collaboration with Indigenous Peoples** and their heritage-bearers – artists, cultural professionals, parents and caregivers – to co-design, implement and review education programmes, materials and resources.

### ***Global Biodiversity Assessments:***

Through the UNESCO LINKS-based Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Technical Support Unit on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (TSU-ILK), many of the IPBES assessments include findings around the importance of recognizing Indigenous rights, including land tenure, free, prior and informed consent and ensuring benefit sharing. The findings of these assessments can be accessed at: <https://www.ipbes.net/ilk-messages-from-assessments>. The IPBES thematic dialogues and the IPBES approach to working with Indigenous and local knowledge ([https://files.ipbes.net/ipbes-web-prod-public-files/inline/files/ipbes\\_ilkapproach\\_ipbes-5-15.pdf](https://files.ipbes.net/ipbes-web-prod-public-files/inline/files/ipbes_ilkapproach_ipbes-5-15.pdf)) and methodological material on recognizing and working with ILK in IPBES systematically include guidance on working with free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

### ***National Ecosystem Assessments:***

Within the framework of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES-Net), BES-Net consortium (UNDP, UNEP-WCMC and UNESCO) in collaboration with SwedBio and partners have been organizing a series of dialogue workshops with different actors to anchor human rights-based approach in biodiversity and climate action as envisioned in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Paris Agreement.

### ***United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030):***

The outcomes report from the 2024 Ocean Decade Conference entitled “Ambition, Action, Impact – the Ocean Decade Pathway to 2030” identifies a series of key actions for enhanced engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the Ocean Decade. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391502.locale=en>.

### ***Disaster Risk Reduction:***

UNESCO LINKS programme published the results of the community-based study on *Indigenous Peoples' Traditional Knowledge of Fire – Case studies from the Guiana Shield*. The study highlights case studies from Guyana, Suriname, Venezuela and part of Brazil on traditional fire management and related preventive measures used by Indigenous Peoples, including women, of this region which encompasses about one-third of the Amazon basin. The research aims to enhance cooperation between Indigenous knowledge holders, fire experts and policymakers to better inform policies on fire management and reduce and prevent fire disasters. The findings were presented at the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) First Regional Meeting of the Amazon Network for Integrated Fire Management (RAMIF), held on 4 June 2024, to inform their Member States about the value of including Indigenous Peoples' knowledge of fire in their policies and preventive

measures. These findings were also featured at an event during CBD COP16 in Cali, Colombia, in October 2024.

### ***Biosphere Reserves and Global Geoparks***

Under the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB), the World Network of Biosphere Reserves promotes cooperation between relevant actors of sustainable conservation efforts. It advocates for an enabling environment and policies that allow Indigenous Peoples and local communities to manage and benefit from their ancestral lands. Key activities undertaken in 2024 include:

- IberoMAB in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) engaged with over 300 stakeholders from 26 countries to develop an Action Framework (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388665>) on the Implementation of Indigenous Peoples' and people of African descent's Rights in LAC Biosphere Reserves. The objective of the Action Framework is to implement UNESCO's Policy on engaging with Indigenous Peoples at the international, country and site levels. As a follow-up, important new initiatives on Indigenous Peoples and Biosphere Reserves are underway in Central America and South America:
  - In Central America, the project "Indigenous Knowledge and Nature based Solution in Biosphere Reserves Project", funded by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), aims to recognize and make visible Indigenous knowledge on traditional farming practices, water management techniques and other ecological and cultural activities in 3 Biosphere Reserves: Rio Platano in Honduras, Agua y Paz in Costa Rica; and La Amistad in Panama.
  - Initiatives to develop methodological manuals for rights-based methodologies to work with Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent are underway in 8 countries (Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Panamá Paraguay and Perú). These methodologies include free, prior informed consent, traditional ecological calendars, participatory environmental mapping. Furthermore, the "*Geotourism for UNESCO Global Geoparks: A toolkit for developing and managing tourism*", funded by AECID and published in 2024, includes sections on working equitably with Indigenous Peoples and ensuring free, prior informed consent for UNESCO Global Geoparks in LAC and the Arab States when developing strategies for geotourism.
- Various projects underscore the organization's commitment to biodiversity and sustainability. One notable project is the Amazon Biosphere Reserves project, funded by LVMH, which aims to improve the resilience and halt biodiversity loss in the Greater Amazon Basin. This project emphasizes the role of Indigenous knowledge in environmental conservation. Implemented across eight biosphere reserves in Bolivia (2), Brazil (1), Ecuador (3), and Peru (2), covering 5% of the Amazon basin, the project has already supported over 50 activities, several focused on Indigenous Peoples. These initiatives include strengthening biosphere reserve governance, enhancing integrated management plans, and implementing fire prevention and control measures. The project fosters collaboration and knowledge co-creation among scientific, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, while promoting innovation and developing value chains and socio-economic activities such as community-based tourism. Emphasizing Indigenous peoples, gender and youth empowerment, the project provides training and leadership tools, benefiting over 1,000 families in its first three years of implementation.
- UNESCO (Brasilia field office), in partnership with the Brazilian Network of Biosphere Reserves, the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples, and the Ministry of Racial Equality, is promoting the "Intercultural Dialogues in the Biosphere Reserves – 2024 / 2025". This initiative, which will last for two years, aims to stimulate the leadership of Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent, increasing their representation in the governance structures of Brazil's Biosphere Reserves. The outcome of this collective construction process will be the "National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and people of African

descent in Brazilian Biosphere Reserves – 2026 / 2035". This plan will serve as a crucial tool for the development of public policies, guidance for private sector investments, and support for decision-making by traditional communities.

### ***Open science and Science, technology and innovation***

In the context of the 2021 UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science, which recognizes open dialogue across knowledge systems as a pillar of more open and equitable science, UNESCO encourages the inclusion of dialogue as part of scientific practice. Recommended practices include dialogue with Indigenous knowledge systems and targeted inclusion of marginalized and underrepresented researchers, with actions from science actors within and outside of conventional research-performing institutions. Future efforts aim to convene diverse actors employing mechanisms for open dialogue in different contexts and to develop high-level guidance for creating spaces, incentives and mechanisms for open dialogue.

In 2024, UNESCO has actively contributed to advancing Indigenous Peoples' rights in science, technology, and innovation (STI). Under the 2024 G20 Brazilian presidency, UNESCO assisted the Working Group on Research and Innovation in producing the G20 Recommendations on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in STI, which underscores the importance of Indigenous Peoples being active participants and beneficiaries in scientific endeavors. These recommendations encourage collaboration in knowledge production with Indigenous Peoples, respecting their rights to govern and make decisions about their traditional knowledge, data, lands, and resources. They also support capacity development for Indigenous Peoples to plan, implement, and manage their own research as well as development of policies and opportunities that empower Indigenous Peoples to enhance competitiveness while preserving their culture and identity.

By incorporating diverse knowledge, including that of Indigenous Peoples, into mainstream scientific research, these initiatives promote a more comprehensive and culturally responsive approach to addressing today's sustainability challenges.

### ***Elimination of racial discrimination:***

In relation to Article 2 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNESCO continues the implementation of the Global Call against Racism and Discrimination (2020) and the promotion of the Roadmap against Racism and Discrimination. In December 2023, the third Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination took place in Sao Paulo, Brazil with a specific panel on Discrimination towards Indigenous Peoples.

### ***Youth:***

In relation to Article 21 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to ensure continuing improvement of economic and social conditions of Indigenous Peoples, UNESCO has supported during 2023 and 2024, young Indigenous leaders from Ecuador and Mexico in the framework of "Because Youth Matter" to strengthen their capacities.

### ***Culture***

UNESCO has been working resolutely in recent years to integrate the fundamental principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent into the functioning of the World Heritage Convention, following its inclusion in the Operational Guidelines of the Convention in 2019. In this context, thanks to the support of Canadian and Australian governments, UNESCO and the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on World Heritage (IIPFWH) co-organised a special side event on this topic during the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee (New Delhi, July 2024), with Indigenous representatives from all socio-cultural regions. The IIPFWH also addressed the Committee to share its views and concerns on approaches and practices in World Heritage contexts.

## Questionnaire to UN system

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UNESCO has advocated for the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples' issues in global and regional policy processes related to Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda SIDS (ABAs) highlights the role of Indigenous knowledge in climate change adaptation and resilience, and calls for their inclusion in sustainable development and environmental conservation and decision-making. It calls for increased support and recognition of Indigenous Peoples' contributions to biodiversity conservation.

During the SIDS4 Conference, UNESCO presented the study *Mapping Cultural Policies in Small Island Developing States*, which highlights the importance of safeguarding Indigenous languages and knowledge systems, particularly in the Pacific subregion, the need to strengthen the cultural rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly in relation to intellectual property frameworks or access to culture, and the close links between ocean knowledge and Indigenous knowledge. These aspects are also strongly highlighted in the Pacific Community (SPC) Regional Culture Strategy 2022-2032. In 2024, UNESCO launched the publication *Celebrating the Living Heritage of Indigenous Peoples*, which pays tribute to the diversity and richness of the heritage of Indigenous Peoples across the globe. This publication presents case studies from eight Indigenous communities, outlining their strategies for preserving their intangible cultural heritage. The book presents a holistic approach to safeguarding and articulating the experiences of communities as set out in UNDRIP. It draws attention to policy areas relevant to sustainable development and the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights, including Indigenous media, language, gender equality, quality education, spiritual traditions, and more (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390088>).

### **Media Development:**

In response to the UNPFII recommendation (E/2023/43-E/C.19/2023/7 paragraph 10), UNESCO established a Working Group to prepare a study on Indigenous media. The group includes the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the European Broadcasting Union, the Public Media Alliance, DW Akademie, the Indigenous Journalists Association, Griffith University, and other organizations and experts.

In 2023–2024, UNESCO organized consultations with Indigenous Peoples, UN entities, media, and civil society, including meetings during the UNPFII (April 2023, July 2024), the EMRIP meeting (July 2023), and the Indigenous Media Conference (July 2024, Oklahoma City).

UNESCO also launched a global survey targeting Indigenous and mainstream media to collect evidence-based data. Additionally, a media monitoring analysis reviewed coverage of Indigenous issues, identifying trends and testing new monitoring tools. The study's findings and recommendations will be presented at the UNPFII's 24th session.

<p>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 (2021-2030), the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development" (2018-2028), the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022 - 2032) and other relevant international decades and processes, including CEDAW General recommendation 39 on Indigenous women and girls.</p>
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### ***UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030)***

The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development is an UN-wide initiative that is being led by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO. It is the largest ever structured global ocean science and knowledge movement and is mobilizing tens of thousands of partners around the world to achieve its vision of the science – and knowledge - we need for the ocean we want. The importance of complementarity between formal ocean science and Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) was recognized from the outset of planning of the Decade. The definition of ocean science in the Ocean Decade Implementation Plan includes 'all knowledge systems including Indigenous and local knowledge'. The Ocean Decade has contributed to a broad

## Questionnaire to UN system

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understanding within the ocean science community of the importance of engaging with ILK holders in co-design processes. Since the start of the Decade we have seen growing levels of awareness of the importance of considering alternative knowledge systems as contributing to sustainable ocean management. The Ocean Decade already includes several mechanisms to recognize, respect and embrace ILK. Examples include:

- Endorsement of Decade Actions requires proponents to demonstrate how they have or will engage with ILK holders – so all Decade Actions have to at least consider this point.
- Decade Advisory Board has included expert members with experience and knowledge in this issue. The current Board includes members with direct ILK experience.
- Several of the Decade coordination structures are addressing ILK issues as part of their mandate and convening ILK stakeholders including the Pacific Islands Decade Collaborative Centre (DCC) hosted by The Pacific Community and partly funded by Australia.
- Several Decade projects from Canada and Australia are led by Indigenous partners and are testing models of informing policy and resource management decisions through ILK systems.
- Several National Decade Committees – including Canada Colombia and New Zealand, – have a strong focus on ILK holders’ engagement in national processes.

The 2024 Ocean Decade Conference was a seminal moment to set the future priorities of the Ocean Decade to 2030. The Barcelona Statement emerging from the Conference recognized the importance of engaging ILK holders and ensuring that ILK is considered an equal and complementary source of knowledge. ILK holders were active participants in the Conference with large delegations from Australia, New Zealand and Canada and inclusion of several specific moments in plenary for the voices of ILK holders to be heard. UNESCO IOC is also developing a new collaboration with the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) in the framework of the World Ocean Assessment, which will include a chapter on ILK for the first time in its 2025 edition, and IOC recently hosted the writing workshop for this chapter. In terms of future perspectives for Indigenous engagement in the Ocean Decade, UNESCO IOC has secured support from Germany through GIZ to hire ILK expertise within the Decade Coordination Unit (DCU) for a period of 11 months to:

- Develop an online training course for the scientific community on how to engage with ILK holders in the framework of the Ocean Decade.
- Animate a Community of Practice to facilitate exchange and discussion between Decade partners on ILK issues, tools and approaches.
- Develop a framework for strengthening inclusion of ILK in Decade structures and processes and develop an operational plan for its implementation, which was discussed at CBD COP16 in Colombia in October 2024.

This process will also support the travel of ILK holders to the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference to ensure that there is strong representation in the Conference and pre-Conference events. IOC-UNESCO will also continue to engage with other partners to identify support for Indigenous-led research in the framework of the Ocean Decade.

UNESCO’s work on capacity development is also effective in the area of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), with various joint UNESCO IOC and LINKS programme initiatives undertaken to promote Indigenous Peoples’ rights, including:

- Organization of MSPglobal Dialogues in 2023 on engaging Indigenous Peoples and local communities in MSP. These dialogues gathered participants from Africa, Americas, Asia, Arctic, the Pacific, and North America (western coast), composed of representatives of Indigenous and small-scale fishers’ organizations, MSP and Marine Protected Areas (MPA) initiatives involving Indigenous Peoples and local communities, as well as experts with experience in engaging Indigenous Peoples and local communities in marine policies, such as researchers and policy-makers.
- Development of guidelines on engaging Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and embracing Indigenous and local knowledge in MSP (“Volume 1: basic concepts

## Questionnaire to UN system

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<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000389940>” and “Volume 2: Good Practices” <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390615>). These guidelines were developed in collaboration with the experts consulted during the dialogues. A webinar was organized in September 2024 to launch these guidelines, serving as capacity building tools to improve consideration for Indigenous Peoples’ rights and their key role in the sustainable conservation of coastal and marine resources.

The input of Indigenous coastal communities is of vital importance to the success of the UN Ocean Decade. They have been responsible for the stewardship of marine ecosystems for generations and possess in-depth knowledge of ocean patterns, biodiversity, and sustainable utilisation of marine resources. The objective of the Decade is to incorporate this knowledge into scientific research and policymaking. By way of illustration, in Micronesia, Indigenous participation in ocean science and the management of their underwater cultural heritage is a priority for them, also due to its importance for tourism and sustainable livelihoods. UNESCO’s activities are focused on two main areas: firstly, the alleviation of threats posed by polluting historic wrecks; and secondly, the safeguarding of underwater heritage sites that are of significant cultural importance to Indigenous communities. These include submerged landscapes, coral reefs and traditional navigation routes that provide valuable insights into the seafaring practices of Pacific Islanders. It is also vital to harness Indigenous knowledge in order to adapt to the effects of climate change, such as ocean acidification and sea-level rise. UNESCO works in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples to address these issues, with the objective of building capacities and increasing knowledge.

In the framework of the "*Canoe Is the People*" project, UNESCO LINKS commissioned research on ancestral voyaging knowledge of Pacific islanders, providing an overview of the history, heritage and contemporary status of Pacific ancestral voyaging knowledge, and a particular focus on the knowledge and skills of women Islanders. Subsequently, the New Zealand National commission for UNESCO commissioned a complementary paper in 2023 on "*āwera, Te Aramahiti, The morning star guides eastward: reviving traditional navigation knowledge in the Pacific*", which was officially launched at the UN Ocean Decade Conference in April 2024.

### ***International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032):***

Among the 50 members of the governance mechanism of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, the Global Task Force, 21 are representatives of Indigenous Peoples’ organizations and institutions, and 7 are Indigenous representatives of UN mechanisms (namely UNPFII, EMRIP and the Special Rapporteur Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples). Each of the 4 Ad-hoc groups include representatives from Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations.

The development of the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education and its subsequent adoption provided an opportunity to promote the International Decade of Indigenous Languages through the organisation of a side event entitled “Digital Arts and Cultural Inclusion: Navigating the Intersection of Technology, Identity, and Dialogue”, which brought together representatives from Member States, the international expert community, academia, and the education technology industry. The goal was to promote linguistic diversity in the age of technology and foster a comprehensive understanding of the skills required to fully leverage the potential of culture and arts education. This will inform future actions.

In line with the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, UNESCO has also been working with local governments and Indigenous communities in Guatemala and Paraguay to document and revitalise Indigenous languages. This work recognises the importance of these languages in transmitting knowledge about biodiversity and land management practices.

In collaboration with the National Museum of Indigenous Peoples, UNESCO is implementing the project ‘Safeguarding the Cultural and Linguistic Heritage of Indigenous Peoples’. The project’s objective is to develop strategies for the protection of the cultural and linguistic heritage of

Indigenous communities residing near the Amazon region. The strategies include field research in cultural dialogue, agreements with representatives of Indigenous communities whose languages are at risk of extinction, and training for language speakers and communities to record and transmit their languages and cultures.

In the Pacific Islands, UNESCO is committed to supporting Indigenous language programmes that safeguard the survival of languages rich in knowledge about the marine environment, traditional navigation, and climate adaptation strategies. By way of illustration, Micronesian seafaring traditions, which are inextricably linked to Indigenous languages, contribute to the cultural heritage and ecosystem management of the region.

### ***International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development:***

Under the umbrella of the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (IDSSD), UNESCO plans to encourage the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in scientific research, particularly in areas like ecosystem restoration. Future efforts aim to strengthen collaborations between Indigenous Peoples and scientists, increase Indigenous representation in global science forums, and offer capacity-building opportunities to Indigenous youth and women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields. However, this is anticipated to develop further over the course of the decade.

### ***International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development” (2018-2028):***

In the framework of the Water Action Decade, UNESCO and its partners are working to integrate Indigenous knowledge into global water governance. In May 2024, during the 10th World Water Forum, UNESCO Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) programme, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples organizations and other partners, organized a session on “Successful water and ecosystem management through Indigenous and Local Knowledge”, focusing on Indigenous Peoples’ vital role in water ecosystem management and rights-based governance. The session highlighted the deep cultural systems Indigenous communities maintain to ensure sustainable care for water resources, encompassing diverse ecosystems such as deserts, oases, islands, mountains, savannahs, and rainforests. These discussions acknowledged Article 25 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, emphasizing their right to maintain spiritual relationships with traditionally-owned lands and waters. Recommendations called for coherent, ecosystem-based, and locally governed water policies integrating Indigenous knowledge to address policy conflicts and colonial legacies. The rationale is to ensure sustainable, inclusive water governance that respects Indigenous leadership and knowledge systems, aiming to advance these rights as the UN Water Action Decade nears its end. The outcome of the 10<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, the Ministerial Declaration on “Water for Shared Prosperity”, welcomed “*efforts and initiatives to promote adaptive and socially inclusive and meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders, including [...] indigenous peoples.*” and declared political will to translate commitments into policies, plans and actions by: “*10. Empowering various stakeholders, including [...] indigenous peoples [...], as agents for change and innovation in the search for smart solutions for water and sanitation challenges, including traditional, local and indigenous knowledge.*” Following this Forum, UNESCO LINKS has identified various Indigenous networks and leaders interested in advancing a stronger Indigenous coalition on freshwater issues, with the aim at providing recommendations to the next UN Water Conference 2026 and its outcome document.

### ***United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030):***

The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) is dedicated to reversing ecosystem degradation across terrestrial, freshwater, and marine environments. The active participation of Indigenous Peoples is a fundamental aspect of the success of these initiatives, given their profound cultural and spiritual ties to the land and natural resources. For instance, UNESCO has collaborated with Indigenous groups in Paraguay to preserve submerged heritage in river systems, underscoring the significance of Indigenous knowledge in the sustainable management of aquatic resources. Indigenous Peoples possess traditional narratives and practices associated with rivers, which contribute to cultural interpretations of underwater heritage and the surrounding ecosystem.



## Questionnaire to UN system

In many regions, including Paraguay, Guatemala, and the Pacific Islands, Indigenous women play a vital role as custodians of traditional knowledge about ecosystems, medicinal plants, and cultural practices. In line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation 39, UNESCO is committed to ensuring that these women are included in environmental governance, cultural heritage preservation, and decision-making processes. UNESCO is actively working to include Indigenous women in leadership roles within the framework of ecosystem restoration and heritage conservation.

iv. Has your entity responded to the 2022 UNPFII recommendation<sup>2</sup> 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.

In its response to the letter of the three Chairs of the United Nations mechanisms related to Indigenous Peoples, UNESCO acknowledged the importance of distinguishing Indigenous Peoples from local communities, recognizing the unique rights, identities, and contributions of Indigenous Peoples, as recommended by the UNPFII. UNESCO upholds a commitment to inclusivity, working collaboratively with Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and other groups to address shared challenges, promote sustainable development, and strengthen resilience.

As part of this commitment, UNESCO aligns its initiatives with the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), ensuring Indigenous perspectives are integrated across its work. Instruments and Programmes like the UNESCO Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples, the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, and the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) programme are designed to specifically address the needs, rights, and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples. These initiatives reflect UNESCO’s dedication to supporting Indigenous knowledge systems, cultural heritage, languages, and rights in ways that respect their unique identities and contributions. This approach underscores UNESCO’s mission to create inclusive pathways for dialogue, capacity-building, and resilience, enabling diverse actors to participate in national, regional, and global efforts to address pressing challenges.

### **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 SWAP<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> E/2022/43-E/C.19/2022/11

<sup>3</sup> 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.

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 2025 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 Forum<sup>4</sup>.

### *Indigenous languages*

UNESCO undertakes actions relevant to all six elements of the SWAP through:

- UNESCO has taken consistent action to raise awareness on UNDRIP, the first element of SWAP, through events and meetings organised by UNESCO in its capacity as the Secretariat of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, as well as through the guidance note provided to Member States, Indigenous Peoples' organizations, and other relevant stakeholders in the development of National Action Plans for the Decade. UNESCO field offices have also organised capacity-building workshops which ensures that the awareness of UNDRIP is raised among relevant stakeholders at the local level. Examples include the "I speak Koya. I speak Baka." organised by the Libreville office to safeguard and promote the Koya and Baka Indigenous languages of northern Gabon through linguistic elicitation, and the International Seminar on Experiences in the Revitalisation of Indigenous Languages organised by the Santiago office on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024, which gathers experts to share ... This is also in line with the fifth SWAP element on capacity-building of Indigenous communities. .
- The organisation of events such as the commemorations of International Translation Day and World Cultural Day for Diversity, meetings such as the regular meetings of the Global Task Force of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, and the use of social media platforms, UNESCO has raised awareness on the UNDRIP as it forms the basis for such activities.
- For the implementation of UNDRIP at the country level, the second SWAP element, UNESCO supports the development of National Action Plans in which Member States outline their national strategies on Indigenous language preservation. Since the last session, Mexico and Canada have developed their own action plans, making a total of 14 National Action Plans. Parallel to that, stakeholder engagement workshops were held by UNESCO's field offices also help facilitate an inclusive process for National Action Plan development, with recent ones being held in Namibia, Nepal and Nigeria on 16 July 2024, 15 August 2024 and 9 September 2024 respectively.
- The third SWAP element, which urges the incorporation of Indigenous issues in the achievement of the 2030 agenda, is ensured in how UNESCO's efforts are focused on specific SDGs, which is detailed in Section C. Meanwhile, the fourth element, the mapping of existing standards and guidelines, capacities, training materials and resources within the United Nations system, was a key outcome of the inter-agency meeting which UNESCO organised on the side of the 17<sup>th</sup> session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in June 2024. The meeting was a significant milestone for the different UN agencies to share each of their own initiatives and capacities with regards to Indigenous languages specifically.

### *Fight against Racism & Discrimination*

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<sup>4</sup> 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.

## Questionnaire to UN system

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The Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination as well as UNESCO's Toolkit against Racism and Discrimination serves a platform for capacity building (SWAP Element 5). Furthermore, Indigenous Peoples have been participating as well in the Global Forum, both in Mexico (2022) as in Sao Paolo (2023) (SWAP Element 6).

### **Education**

In the area of education, UNESCO supported the implementation of the UNDRIP, particularly at the country level:

- To celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) released a compendium of four articles considering Mayan education, interculturality in education in Bolivia and Peru, and community higher education in Mexico (<https://www.iesalc.unesco.org/en/2024/08/09/the-university-as-a-space-for-contributing-to-interculturality/>).
- Materials developed by UNESCO Brazil as part of the **EDUCASTEM** project aiming to get more girls to take up Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) studies and carriers have included a strong focus on Indigenous women making strong contributions to STEM. This is part of efforts to break gender and other stereotypes and recognize contributions by Indigenous women.

UNESCO also develops the capacity of States, Indigenous Peoples, civil society and UN personnel in education through for example:

- The UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC), which has dedicated a space in the *Educación Superior y Sociedad* journal to the Indigenous Peoples of the region, to reinforce their languages and reflect on their situation in higher education since 2022 (<https://iesalc.unesco.org/ess/index.php/ess3/article/view/v34i2-11>).

### **Media development**

With support of the UNESCO Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists (MDP), UNESCO enhanced the capacities of community media in Bangladesh, Guatemala, Nepal, Kenya, United Republic of Tanzania, and South Sudan. The annual report summarized activities implemented through the funds pooled under the MDP mechanism. This mechanism enables UNESCO to address complex issues relating to freedom of expression, media development, including the strengthening of Indigenous-led media outlets, and other aspects related to the safety of journalists. (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000389513/PDF/389513eng.pdf.multi>)

#### **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 2025 session of the Forum, including SDGs 5, 7, 10, 13 and 16.

#### ***SDG 5 on Gender Equality:***

For the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, UNESCO co-organized a hybrid event entitled "Voices of Resilience: The importance of Indigenous Women for Language Preservation", with the Permanent Delegation of Colombia to UNESCO on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024. The event highlighted and discussed Indigenous women's efforts as cultural

custodians, educators, and community builders as being vital to the preservation, revitalization and sustainability of Indigenous languages. The event saw the active participation of Indigenous women from various fields, including a woman representative from the *Associação dos Índios Kokamas Residente no Município de Manaus* (AKIM), an Indigenous Peoples' Organization, Ambassadors, a woman youth activist. Gender equality and women empowerment is listed as one of the ten thematic outputs of the Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

The Ocean Decade is in the process of establishing an expert working group on gender issues that will develop a gender action plan for the Decade that will contribute to SDG5. This action plan will include specific consideration of the ways in which Indigenous women can be engaged in, and benefit from, the Ocean Decade.

In the framework of UNESCO's programme "Transforming MENTalities", UNESCO has been working directly with the Maya communities of Yucatan in Mexico in the social and economic development of Yucatan embroidery. "Machismo" and gender violence were identified as major challenges for women embroiders in the Maya communities. This led to the implementation of pilot workshops on positive masculinities with men, boys and male embroiderers of the communities, with the purpose of raising awareness about gender prejudices and stereotypes. (SDG 5.1; SDG 5.2).

### ***SDG 10 on Reduced Inequalities:***

Much work has been done to ensure that Indigenous languages are not left behind in a world characterized by rapid digital transformation. UNESCO has published multiple publications in capacity building in this regard, one of which is the "Hello Indigenous" white paper through the "Indigenous Languages on Mobile" partnership with Motorola and Lenovo Foundation. This whitepaper provides technical processes on endangered languages digitization to be shared globally across the industry. Furthermore, the side-event held in partnership between UNESCO, The Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO during the 23<sup>rd</sup> UNPFII session saw the launch of Ad-hoc Group 4 on Digital Equality and Domains. The group has since been formed from 20 individual experts in this field.

In the framework of the Global Call against Racism and Discrimination, UNESCO's annual Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination has become the place to be for government representatives, academia and civil society to share challenges and good practices and forge impactful partnerships. Indigenous peoples have been present and participating at the Global Forums in Mexico City (2022) and Sao Paulo (2023), and will continue to do so in the 4th edition to be held in December 2024 in Barcelona. The Outcome Statement of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition held in Brazil on 1 December 2023, highlighted the importance of constitutional recognition of minority, Indigenous and vulnerable groups in national constitutions such as in Nepal and South Africa. The Forum was attended by more than 1,000 participants from governments, international organizations, businesses and civil society from more than 45 countries, including twenty at the ministerial level. The participants acknowledged the Forum as giving a voice to Indigenous Peoples and shared solutions to address the socio-economic disparities they face.

### ***SDG 13 on Climate Action:***

UNESCO's initiatives for SDG 13 on Climate Action also supports the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in climate adaptation strategies. The UNESCO LINKS Programme has organized consultations and published findings that highlight how traditional knowledge contributes to climate resilience and disaster risk reduction. Studies on fire management in the Guiana Shield showcase Indigenous practices that mitigate wildfire risks and enhance ecosystem management. Such

collaborative efforts ensure that climate policies are informed by both scientific research and traditional knowledge, creating effective, culturally relevant solutions to climate challenges and fostering a synergy between formal science and Indigenous practices for sustainable development.

### ***SDG 14 on Life below water***

In support of SDG 14 on Life Below Water, UNESCO's contributions are evident in the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, which emphasizes Indigenous and local knowledge integration into marine conservation. Partnerships with Pacific Island communities safeguard underwater heritage and promote sustainable marine resource management, highlighting the essential role Indigenous knowledge plays in ocean stewardship. By ensuring the participation of Indigenous Peoples in marine conservation and related policymaking, UNESCO demonstrates the importance of combining traditional knowledge with formal scientific research to achieve sustainable ocean governance and preserve marine biodiversity.

### ***SDG 15 on Life on land***

UNESCO's work also advances SDG 15 by promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and fostering biodiversity conservation through Indigenous knowledge systems. Through the IPBES Technical Support Unit on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (TSU-ILK), hosted at UNESCO LINKS, Indigenous participation is central to biodiversity assessments, ensuring that traditional ecological practices inform sustainable land management strategies. UNESCO's support to national ecosystem assessments, through the BES-Net, further emphasize the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and rights in ecosystem conservation, promoting practices that support land restoration, pollinator conservation, and reduce land degradation. UNESCO's support for national ecosystem assessments in countries like Botswana, Cambodia, and the Dominican Republic facilitates the inclusion of traditional knowledge into conservation strategies, thereby strengthening biodiversity policies that respect Indigenous custodianship of natural resources and align with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

### ***SDG 16 on Peace, justice and strong institutions:***

UNESCO's work aligns with SDG 16 by fostering inclusive policy processes that respect Indigenous rights. The Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination and UNESCO's emphasis on Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) contribute to just governance and social cohesion. The organization's examination of national policies and support for Indigenous-led media further amplifies Indigenous voices, supporting their rights to freedom of expression and access to information. Additionally, UNESCO's development of National Action Plans for Indigenous Languages and culturally sensitive educational policies ensures that Indigenous perspectives are included in governance, building resilient and equitable institutions that value diversity and promote peaceful societies.

UNESCO also works to enhance the capacity of its Member States and media organizations to foster pluralism and diversity in the media sector. Free, independent and pluralistic media institutions are crucial to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies. The ongoing preparation of the UNESCO study on Indigenous Peoples and the Media, scheduled for submission to the UNPFII in 2025, will contribute to the access to diverse information and media content, including in indigenous languages. It thereby supports the preservation of linguistic and cultural diversity, the sharing of traditional knowledge and the giving of a voice to Indigenous Peoples in society.

### ***SDG 4 on Quality Education:***

At the 2024 Global Education Meeting in Fortaleza in Brazil, a dedicated session discussed the right to quality education for Indigenous Peoples and cultural and linguistic minorities dedicated to Indigenous Peoples and minorities, as a contribution to SDG4.5 target. The concluding recommendations called for the following actions for governments and their partners:

## Questionnaire to UN system

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- Implement and enforce inclusive legal and policy frameworks that value and celebrate diversity, focus on rights, prevent and redress discrimination, expand access and equal education pathways, and translate these into practices within societies and education.
- Ensure the active engagement of minorities across education planning and delivery to preserve linguistic and cultural identity, improve education for both minorities and dominant groups, and ensure peaceful and resilient societies.
- Promote multidimensional empowerment that fosters inclusion by training teachers in culturally-responsive teaching and developing culturally-relevant curriculum; and empowering learners with education in languages that they understand best and that values their diversity.

The joint UNESCO-Alwaleed Philanthropies pilot project activities in the Andean provinces of Catamarca and Salta, Argentina, provide support for vocational education and training for communities that involve up to 55% of persons identifying as part of an Indigenous community. In addition to their role as heritage bearers, these participants are equipped with the skills to act as teachers within their communities, sharing their traditional knowledge alongside cultural, digital, and entrepreneurial expertise. This experience will enable them to adapt existing pedagogical approaches, thereby co-creating a professional training curriculum for artisans at the provincial level that can serve as a transferable good practice example.

ii. Please describe any activities your entity organized in support of the 2024 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and/or reports and activities that supported SDG reporting and monitoring or a VNR process at the national, regional, or global level.

**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 2025 session of the PFII.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) multi-sectoral and transdisciplinary initiatives foster the implementation of the UNDRIP and Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring the voices of Indigenous Peoples shape global, regional and national policies and strategies for education, culture, biodiversity conservation, and socio-economic development.

Thanks to the opportunity provided by the UNESCO Intersectoral Programme 3 on ‘Promoting Indigenous Knowledge, Culture and Languages as a Pathway to Inclusion’ and within the framework of UNESCO Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples, work continues to support the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge systems and practices into policies for achieving the SDGs, including SDGs 4, 5, 10, 13, 14, 15 and 16, as well as advancing the implementation of UNDRIP and its 6 elements.

In addition, UNESCO, through the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, has implemented key actions to support the preservation of Indigenous languages. 4 Ad-hoc groups were created to advise on the Global Action Plan, with significant involvement from Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous youth. New publications, such as a Guidance note for National Action Plans and an upcoming practical guide on good practices, will reinforce policy development. Collaborative efforts with UN agencies further support these goals. UNESCO also promotes SDGs 5 and 10, particularly through Indigenous women-led initiatives and partnerships addressing language digitization to improve access to information.

UNESCO's proactive engagement with Indigenous-led media, the development of tools for anti-racism, and contributions to the Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination emphasize its holistic approach. These programs support Indigenous voices and advocate for inclusive representation.

UNESCO's work also led to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) to fully embrace the importance of Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) as a means of driving solutions for sustainable development. In addition to the existing structural processes and requirements for engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the Decade, additional specific expertise on ILK issues has been recruited within the Decade Coordination Unit. In coming months an operational framework and action plan for enhanced engagement of ILK holders and promotion of Indigenous-led research through the Ocean Decade will be developed through a participatory process. Collaboration with UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) will increase consideration of ILK issues in the World Ocean Assessment, and UNESCO-IOC will support meaningful engagement of Indigenous Peoples at the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference. UNESCO also developed essential tools for policy-makers to include Indigenous and traditional approaches in marine spatial planning and conservation.

The right to education of Indigenous Peoples is seen as transversal to different educational programmes, considering that multilingual education and appropriate language of instruction lay the foundation for learning and improve access and retention to education, especially for traditionally marginalized groups. Through different initiatives in countries such as Brazil, Guatemala, Mexico and Viet Nam, UNESCO has looked at the intersection of discrimination based on ethnicity, language and indigeneity and taken steps to ensure learners can fulfil their right to education.

Moreover, UNESCO's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) Programme has been instrumental in dialogues on biodiversity, ecosystems, climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction, notably through support to Indigenous-led studies on traditional fire management in the Amazon regions and Africa, and participation in key global platforms focused on water, the ocean, and the Nature-Culture nexus, among others. In addition, through IPBES and BES-Net Technical Support Units on Indigenous and Local Knowledge, the organization bridges traditional knowledge and scientific approaches for sustainability through workshops, webinars, dialogues and guidelines on including Indigenous knowledge in global IPBES biodiversity assessments, as well as in national ecosystem assessments.

### ANNEX 1

#### **Agenda of the twenty-fourth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

The Twentieth-fourth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is scheduled to take place from **21 April – 2 May 2025**.

#### **Provisional Agenda**

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Discussion on the theme “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”.
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;
  - (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);
  - (e) Interregional, intergenerational and global dialogue;
  - (f) Dialogue on Indigenous platforms established within United Nations entities;
  - (g) Thematic dialogue on the financing of Indigenous Peoples’ work and participation across the multilateral and regional system.
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-fifth session of the Permanent Forum.
8. Adoption of the report of the Permanent Forum on its twenty-fourth session.