

Questionnaire to UN system – UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Please provide information on the following:

A. Recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and input to the 2023 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.

UNHCR has mobilized the resources and peacebuilding tools available for working with conflict-affected indigenous peoples, notably in countries in North, Central, and South America, where UNHCR operations have largely focused on the protection of displaced and stateless indigenous peoples in Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico.

UNHCR also works to translate guidance and information into local languages, including indigenous languages. Country operations are encouraged to work with local people, including forcibly displaced and stateless persons, to translate information and documents into the most relevant language(s) depending on the context.

UNHCR also shared information with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls in her elaboration in 2022 of a report on violence against indigenous women and girls ([A/HRC/50/26](#)). Linked with this, and referenced in the report, UNHCR hosted an online consultation on 7 March 2022 with Latin American indigenous women and girls who are leaders and activists.

UNHCR provided as well information to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in support of their elaboration of a [General Recommendation on the rights of indigenous women and girls](#)

ii. The theme of the 2023 PFII session is “Indigenous peoples, human health, planetary and territorial health and climate change: a rights-based approach”¹. Please include information on any publications, projects, reports, or activities relevant to this theme.

In April 2021, UNHCR published a **tip sheet** on applying the UNHCR **Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) Policy** to minorities and indigenous peoples. UNHCR is also updating the *Need to Know Guidance on Working with Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in Forced Displacement*, last updated in **2011**.

A **Promising practice** on UNHCR's AGD work with indigenous peoples of Venezuelan origin was established in Brazil.

UNHCR in partnership with Ms. Hindou Ibrahim, UN SDG advocate and former co-chair of the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change, developed a policy brief on [Indigenous Knowledge and Climate Adaptation](#), highlighting the ways in which traditional and indigenous peoples' knowledge contributes to climate change adaptation and how it can reinforce the resilience of vulnerable communities in climate hotspots.

iii. Please provide information on efforts to ensure the participation of indigenous peoples in the international decades declared by the General Assembly, such as the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the

¹ See Annex 1. Agenda of the twenty-second session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development," the International Decade of Indigenous Languages and other relevant international decades and processes.

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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 SWAP².

- 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 2023 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 Forum³.*

UNHCR has contributed to key element 4 with the ongoing work to update the “Need to Know Guidance on Working with Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in Forced Displacement”, last updated in 2011, which maps existing standards and guidelines on working with indigenous peoples in situations of displacement and statelessness.

UNHCR has also contributed to key element 5 by updating guidance as mentioned above, documenting promising practices on working with indigenous peoples in forced displacement to be shared with UNHCR and other UN personnel, as well as with States and other partners. Once this updated guidance is finalized it will be disseminated through multiple channels and a webinar to provide further guidance to UN personnel and partners.

UNHCR has contributed to key element 6 on advancing the participation of indigenous peoples in UN processes through its ongoing work on the meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless persons. UNHCR's Interdivisional Task Team on Meaningful Participation of Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons has an Advisory Board made up of organizations led by displaced and stateless persons. UNHCR is also working with the AGD Group of Friends ahead of the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) 2023, to ensure that all forcibly displaced and stateless persons have opportunities to meaningfully participate in events leading up to, and during the GRF, including indigenous peoples.

² 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.

³ 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.

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 2023 session of the Forum.*

UNHCR has contributed toward SDGs 5, 13, and 17.

SDG 5: UNHCR works on gender equality across the organization; one of the areas of engagement in the AGD Policy (2018) on Gender Equality and Commitments to Women and Girls also recognizes the diversity amongst them, including women and girls belonging to minorities or indigenous groups.

SDG 13: In line with the 2030 Agenda and the principle of “leaving no-one behind,” UNHCR works together with partners to secure the inclusion of disaster-displaced people in national services and to build effective approaches to resilience and solutions that include all AGD groups, including women, youth, children, older persons, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons, and minorities and indigenous peoples. Collaboration, partnership, and consultation with affected populations are essential, especially where we can learn from and support culturally appropriate and effective traditional and indigenous adaptation practices. As UNHCR moves to work more closely in collaboration with displaced and stateless persons, indigenous peoples need to be meaningfully involved in all stages of UNHCR’s climate action work, acknowledging the historical and ongoing role of indigenous peoples in protecting the environment (see the [UNHCR Strategic Framework for Climate Action](#)). A challenge will be to support displaced indigenous communities as they strive to protect their traditional knowledge systems, even when forced to leave their customary lands. Involving indigenous elders in the education of their youth will be crucial, so that they can pass on their traditional knowledge to subsequent generations.

SDG 16: As a means to prevent statelessness, UNHCR supports documentation to the indigenous Ngöbe Bugle people who live in their ancestral territory between Panama and Costa Rica. Since 2014, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Costa Rica and its Civil Registry Office, with UNHCR support, had been articulating actions for statelessness prevention through the *Chiriticos* Project that aimed to address the under-registration of births of indigenous Ngäbe - Buglé persons born in CR to Panamanian parents, all in coordination with the Electoral Tribunal of Panama. UNHCR provided support to GoCR through the designation of technical personnel in the south of the country, particularly in the areas of Coto Brus, Los Santos and Sixaola, to conduct activities to identify persons at risk of statelessness, nationality verification and determination assessments.

As part of the *Chiriticos* Project, with the support of UNHCR, the GoCR developed the following activities: 1) conduct of mobile team to the field to identify persons at risk of statelessness, 2) provision of legal assistance for persons at risk of statelessness, 3) Dissemination of information and sensibilization campaigns on the importance of the birth registration to access the nationality right, directed to Ngäbe-Buglé population, and also to health and educational personnel, 4) Binational meetings with the participation of the Civil Registry Offices of Costa Rica and Panama, 5) Eight binational journeys for birth registration and documentation, in which the birth certification and national identification documents were issued. According to the data shared by the Costa Rican Civil Registry Office, 16,000 were assisted through the *Chiriticos* Project.

This initiative has been recognized as a good practice to advance the prevention of statelessness, through inter-institutional cooperation and the flexibility of procedures and requirements to specify

the birth registration of Nbäbe-Buglé indigenous people. As of June 2018, the Costa Rican Civil Registry Office adopted the implementation of this important initiative and decided to replicate the good practice nationwide. The Civil Registry developed the specific model of attention "*Model of differentiated attention for the prevention of statelessness in indigenous and border areas*", which seeks to apply differentiated measures to vulnerable populations and facilitate their birth registration, all in line with the age, gender and diversity approach. UNHCR continues to coordinate with the Civil Registry and with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to address statelessness in the country.

SDG 17: As mentioned above, UNHCR is working on the meaningful participation of and partnership with forcibly displaced and stateless persons, including indigenous peoples.

- ii. *Please describe any activities your entity organized in support of the 2022 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.*

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D. COVID-19 pandemic

Please provide information on action taken by your agency, fund and/or programme since your last update to the Forum, to address building back better from COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of Agenda 2030 for indigenous peoples.

Initiatives related to public health like peer-to-peer support and improved communication through community radios included key tools in the Americas to share information about COVID-19, to address fake news and promote adherence to vaccination and treatment. A key initiative was the inclusion of *tradicional medicinal* practices as part of the treatment, and in partnership with the Warao and Eñepa communities in Brazil, the consolidation of a multilingual health brochure to facilitate communication and health promotion (<https://www.acnur.org/noticias/noticia/2020/4/5ea75fda4/folleto-multilingue-promueve-la-salud-de-los-refugiados-indigenas-venezolanos.html>).