

ECOSOC Management Segment

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Statement by the Chairperson on the Report of the 24th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Ms. Aluki Kotierk

Distinguished delegates,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to address you today and reflect on the outcomes of the twenty-fourth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues held its 24th session from 21 April – 2 May 2025. I would like to sincerely thank the Member States that actively participated, especially those that supported the participation of Indigenous Peoples from their regions.

I am honored to present the report of the Permanent Forum as contained in document E/2025/43. This year's report reflects the Forum's in-depth discussions and recommendations, shaped by the active engagement of Indigenous Peoples, Member States, UN entities, and other stakeholders.

The special theme of the twenty-fourth session was "Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples within Member States and the United Nations system, including identifying good practices and addressing challenges."

At the heart of this year's session was a clear and unwavering message: the rights of Indigenous Peoples, as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, are non-negotiable. These rights must be fully implemented by all Member States and UN bodies. This is not a matter of discretion; it is a matter of justice.

The Forum underscored the critical importance of Indigenous-led education initiatives that are deeply rooted in cultural knowledge systems and practices. Education must not be a tool of assimilation, but a foundation for empowerment and self-determination. It must uplift Indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and values, and be shaped by the communities it serves.

We also reaffirmed the critical importance of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), particularly in the context of mining and critical mineral extraction. Development must never come at the cost of Indigenous Peoples' lands, territories, cultures, or livelihoods. FPIC is not a procedural formality; it is a fundamental right.

In the face of the climate crisis and biodiversity loss, the Forum called for strengthened Indigenous leadership in environmental stewardship. Their role and knowledge in conservation and climate action must be recognized, respected, and supported.

We also stressed the need for direct financing and inclusive partnerships that support Indigenous-led initiatives, if they agree to participate. Indigenous youth and women's leadership is key to a just and sustainable future.

A key focus this year was health and wellness amid conflict. Indigenous Peoples continue to face significant health disparities, worsened by armed conflict, militarization, and displacement, which increase violence, trauma, and disrupt essential health services—especially for Indigenous women and children. The Forum called for targeted humanitarian assistance and accountability for violations of international law impacting Indigenous Peoples.

We also raised alarm over toxic exposure from extractive industries, particularly mercury contamination, which severely affects Indigenous Peoples' health—especially the neurological development of children. In addition, we condemned the ongoing practices in some regions of forced sterilization and high rates of Indigenous child removals by state agencies. These violations must be investigated and addressed through a human rights-based approach to reproductive and family health.

As we face upcoming challenges and opportunities, the Permanent Forum presents clear and actionable recommendations for Member States, and the UN system—more than guidance, a call to action.

The Forum emphasized the importance of recognizing Indigenous justice systems, especially where they intersect with formal legal systems. At the same time, it stressed the urgent need to protect Indigenous human rights defenders, ensuring their right to access to justice and safety. Both are essential to safeguarding the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We call for stronger coordination across UN agencies to support Indigenous Peoples through the System-Wide Action Plan. Indigenous Peoples' participation must be guaranteed in

all relevant UN processes, especially those related to environmental issues, including climate change and biodiversity. Our voices must not only be heard—they must shape the outcomes.

The Forum urged that the Secretary-General's UN80 Initiative and the ongoing liquidity crisis should not limit Indigenous Peoples' participation, but rather be used to strengthen their full and effective engagement within the United Nations system.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Looking ahead to next year, you have before you a provisional agenda draft where the Permanent Forum has identified the theme "Ensuring Indigenous Peoples' health, including in the context of conflict". This focus reflects the Forum's ongoing commitment to addressing urgent challenges affecting the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples, particularly in complex and crisis situations.

The Permanent Forum has also proposed the organization of a three-day International Expert Group meeting on the theme "Recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights in the context of the climate crisis, biodiversity governance and territorial integrity: focusing on nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples, including pastoralists and shifting cultivators" to inform the next session of the Forum. This is a new and emerging topic, recognizing the urgent need to address the rights and challenges of Indigenous Peoples who continue to maintain mobile lifestyles despite increasing pressures from climate change, land encroachment, and state policies.

The Forum remains actively engaged with ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, to ensure that Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and perspectives enrich your deliberations. Distinguished delegates, I am at your disposal for any questions you may have, and I sincerely thank you for your time and attention.