



UNHRC

Background paper

"Protecting and Promoting the rights of Indigenous Peoples rights"

I. Committee background

The United Nations human rights council (UNHRC) was established in 2006 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). It is composed of 47 member states elected with 3-year terms and has support from the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The main purpose of the UNHRC committee is to promote and protect human rights around the world. This is done by addressing violations that have occurred no matter where they are and to recommend ways for the governments to change or improve their human rights practices, reviewing each member state's human rights record through the universal periodic review (UPR). The council carries these out by adopting resolutions or decisions during regular sessions that express the will of the international community on given human rights issues and situations. The council also holds crisis meetings, known as special sessions, which are to respond to organ human rights issues/situations which 39 have been held to date 2026. These regulations and tools help highlight violations and provide technical assistance and apply pressures on governments to improve their human rights practices. Special rules and procedures are appointed to independent experts by the UNHRC to observe, advise and report on human rights. Either worldwide by them or within a specific selection of countries. This allows human rights to be recognized by the global community for all people.



II. Introduction to the topic

Recently, the rights of Indigenous people have been progressively given more attention by the UN system. Yet, Indigenous people are still disproportionately affected by climate change, environmental degradation, high levels of poverty, poor access to education

and healthcare, and broader human rights violations. While Indigenous people represent over 6% of the world's population (476 million people in 90 countries), they are nearly three times more likely to live in extreme poverty. They account for almost 19% of the world's extreme poor. Indigenous people have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, including its economic and cultural consequences, which influence people's lives, communities, and standing in society. Worldwide, there is a lack of disaggregated data on Indigenous peoples, where the data exists.



The Situation for Indigenous Women

Indigenous women and youth are particularly vulnerable, as they are disproportionately affected by a lack of access to education, employment opportunities, decision-making, and justice. The semi-autonomous status and social exclusion of Indigenous communities have led to insufficient mechanisms for addressing gender-based violence, which is often higher than national averages in many countries worldwide.



Threats to land and resources

Indigenous people continue to face threats, especially to their land rights, due to natural resource extraction, infrastructure projects, large-scale agriculture, and conservation. In some situations, there is a higher risk of statelessness, particularly for Indigenous people whose traditional lands cross national borders, as their land may be taken or lost. Indigenous Peoples and local communities manage or have tenure rights over more than 25% of the world's land across 87 countries. Their traditional lands also overlap

with approximately 40% of the world's terrestrial protected areas and contain areas holding an estimated 80% of the planet's biodiversity. This highlights the importance of protecting Indigenous land rights, as their territories play a major role in global conservation and biodiversity.

Displacement, conflict and reprisals

Indigenous people continue to face threats, especially to their land rights, due to natural resource extraction, infrastructure projects, large scale agricultural and conservation. In some situations, there is a higher risk of statelessness, specially/mostly for those indigenous people whose tradition lands cross national borders. Indigenous people and local communities have rights over more than 25% of the worlds land across 87 countries, their traditional lands also overlap with approximately 40% of the worlds protected areas and contain areas holding 80% of the world's biodiversity. This highlights the importance of protecting the indigenous land rights.

Participation of Indigenous People at the UN

On September 8th of 2017, the General Assembly made and signed the resolution A/RES/71/32 which was entitled Enhancing the Participation of Indigenous Peoples' Representative and Institution in Meetings of Relevant United Nation Bodies on Issues Affecting Them. The resolution reaffirms indigenous peoples' rights, recognizes that they need a way to participate directly in discussions of issues that affect them, builds on commitments made at the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, requests the president of the general assembly to develop possible ways for indigenous representatives/institutions to participate in relevant UN meetings, establishes practical rules about who can participate/in what meetings/how they can participate and calls for the process to respect the diversity of indigenous peoples and their representative institutions. This resolution was adopted without a vote.

III. Essential Questions / Key Issues

1. How can UN member states protect indigenous people from human-right violations and discrimination from others?
2. How can indigenous people's traditions, cultures and languages be preserved?

3. How can economic development be balanced with indigenous cultural and land rights?
4. How can we make it easier for indigenous people to participate and have a voice on matters that relate to them in the General Assembly?
5. How can we prevent loss of land and disposition for indigenous people?
6. How could we minimize the amounts of threats and killings of indigenous people?

IV. Countries List

1. Angola
2. Egypt
3. Ethiopia
4. Ghana
5. Kenya
6. Malawi
7. South Africa
8. China
9. India
10. Indonesia
11. Pakistan
12. Thailand
13. Vietnam
14. Albania
15. Spain
16. United Kingdom
17. Bulgaria
18. Italy
19. Bolivia
20. Brazil
21. Chile
22. Colombia
23. Dominican Republic

- 24.Ecuador
- 25.Mexico

V. Sources

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