

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 54th SESSION

Interactive Dialogue with the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)

28 September 2023

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Sheryl Lightfoot, Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)**, presented the annual report to the Council, focusing on the study's findings regarding the impact of militarization on Indigenous Peoples' rights. The study emphasized the need to align militarization with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and examined various aspects, including the prohibition of military activities in Indigenous lands. The report also discussed efforts to implement the Declaration and suggested measures such as establishing national oversight bodies. The Expert Mechanism engaged in various activities, including dialogues with other UN Indigenous rights mechanisms, discussions on Indigenous languages, and panels on Indigenous Peoples' traditional and economic activities, including LGBTQIA+ rights. The report encouraged Indigenous Peoples' increased participation in UN bodies and continued their country engagement work, including a successful repatriation effort with the Yaqui Peoples' sacred Maaso Kova. Ms. Lightfoot emphasized EMRIP's cooperation with other UN entities, including the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The Expert Mechanism expressed gratitude to the UN Human Rights Council, particularly **Guatemala and Mexico**, and all contributors for their collaborative efforts to advance Indigenous Peoples' rights and the realization of relevant human rights instruments.

Mr. Pablo Miss on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations highlighted the Fund's growth over 38 years, supporting over 3,000 indigenous representatives in UN processes. Since March 2022, the Fund resumed its regular programming, tripling the number of grantees in 2022. The Fund is set to support 162 indigenous representatives in various UN meetings. The Fund also backed regional forums and offered capacity-building, with over 2,000 indigenous representatives benefiting from training. Mr. Miss expressed the Fund's commitment to indigenous women's empowerment. He also recognized the impact of Indigenous Peoples' engagement in UN human rights work. Mr. Miss mentioned that the Fund's sustainability depends on contributions from governments. He noted that the resolution on Human Rights and Indigenous Peoples being considered calls for an additional expansion of the mandate of the Fund and to support Indigenous Peoples in the Enhanced Participation sessions. Finally, he encouraged Council members to support a healthy replenishment of the Fund's annual budget.

Interactive dialogue

All states and state organizations highlighted the importance of the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples across the UN system. Many states expressed the need to ensure Indigenous Peoples' participation in all UN processes and agencies. Some states such as **Panama, Canada, Bolivia, and Honduras** expressed their support for the demilitarization of Indigenous lands. The **EU** emphasized indigenous peoples' profound traditional knowledge and cultural perspectives which are key in addressing complex global challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainable development. **Guatemala** stressed the need for increased efforts to promote equality, non-discrimination, self-determination, and the full participation of Indigenous Peoples with a human rights-based approach. It emphasized the importance of finding new ways to involve Indigenous Peoples' representatives and institutions in the HRC. **Brazil** highlighted the importance of human rights provisions in trade agreements and the environment and trade agenda to protect indigenous peoples' rights.

The **United States of America** emphasized the high value of traditional knowledge in dealing with climate change and gender-based violence. **China** denounced **Australia** for conducting military experiments in indigenous territories and condemned **the U.S. military base in Japan** for environmental pollution and acts of gender-based violence against indigenous peoples. **Indonesia** rejected the mandate's allegations regarding violations against indigenous peoples in West Papua province. The **Russian Federation** urged the mandate to refer to the negative impact of UCMs on the rights of indigenous peoples and highlighted the importance of broadening their participation in the UN system. **Bolivia** emphasized the importance of a culture of peace, the right to peace, and international cooperation to advance the rights of indigenous peoples around the world. **Azerbaijan** regretted false allegations concerning the conflict with **Armenia** and urged the mandate to report on the Azerbaijani indigenous peoples that have been forcibly displaced from their land. **Ukraine** condemned **Russia's** violations of **Crimean Tatars** and called upon the mandate to include the militarization of Ukraine's peninsula in its report.

Canada expressed its support for the demilitarization of Indigenous lands and emphasized the need for Indigenous peoples, including women, to have a say in decisions affecting their rights. It emphasized the need for states to protect Indigenous peoples, especially human rights defenders, from intimidation, harassment, violence, murders, forced disappearances, or legal prosecution. It also highlighted the importance of businesses respecting Indigenous rights. **Peru** mentioned it precedes the Andean Committee of Government Authorities on Indigenous Peoples' Rights, which aims to contribute to the effective implementation of international conventions and treaties on Indigenous Peoples' rights signed by the countries of the Andean Community (CAN). The **United Republic of Tanzania** rejected the Expert Mechanism's allegations regarding cases of violence, rape, denial of medical care, destruction of property, and forced evictions of indigenous peoples in the country. **Venezuela** cautioned the Expert Mechanism against giving credence to unverified information or information from unofficial sources regarding the incident that occurred in March 2022 in the state of Amazonas involving individuals belonging to the Yanomami people.

Two NGOs denounced states of exception in **Guatemala** which have been increasingly used to militarize indigenous lands, facilitating the excessive use of force by the military to suppress indigenous communities in the exercise of their right to freedom of expression and freedom of association, as well as to contain territorial conflicts. One NGO condemned the killings of Indigenous Peoples living on the **Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua**. Another NGO urged for the operationalization and mainstreaming of the right to development in connection with the rights of indigenous peoples. One NGO expressed its concern over the increasing process of militarization of the Mapuche ancestral lands in **Chile**. One NGO denounced the killing of **Peruvian** indigenous peoples in some Amazon regions and another one expressed concern over the impacts of militarization of Ogoni people's lands in **Nigeria**. One NGO condemned the absence of any reference to **Israel's** use of militarisation against the **indigenous Palestinian people**. One NGO denounced violations against the indigenous Batwa in the Kahuzi-Biega National Park (or PNKB) in the **DRC**. Another NGO urged states to ensure that their legitimate biodiversity and climate mitigation efforts fully comply with international standards, in particular donor states like **Germany and the United States**.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (18 country delegations):

European Union, Guatemala (on behalf of a group of countries), Brazil, United States of America, Honduras, Canada, China, Indonesia, Russian Federation, Peru, Australia, United Republic of Tanzania, Panama, Cuba, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Azerbaijan, Ukraine.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (10):

International Indian Treaty Council, Franciscans International, Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund, Genève pour les droits de l'homme: formation internationale, Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII, Edmund Rice International Limited, Al-Haq: Law in the Service of Man, Minority Rights Group, International Committee for the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, Right Livelihood Award Foundation.

To watch the full meeting refer to [UN Web TV](#).