

**48<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council**

**Annual Panel on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

Thank you, President.

The COVID-19 pandemic has spread in many indigenous communities- both in the global north and south- at an alarming rate. Nurtured by pre-existing inequalities and marginalization, we have witnessed how the pandemic has increased the threat to their ancestral lands and forests, food security, health and wellbeing.

The rate of infections among Indigenous peoples has rocketed due to multiple factors, particularly their limited access to prevention and treatment measures, including covid vaccines. Indigenous women and girls have been particularly impacted. They are more likely to be working in the informal sector, to be the primary care givers in the household and they have less access to health services, due to costs, distance, lack of inter-culturally appropriate services, and institutionalized discrimination.

Yet, we are also seeing how indigenous communities, including indigenous women's organizations are themselves mobilizing and organizing to protect their communities and drawing on their own traditional indigenous knowledge, governance systems and practices to address the pandemic.

UNFPA has championed a targeted focus on indigenous women and girls in Covid 19 national prevention and response plans. UNFPA has been providing PPE material to health care workers supporting indigenous communities; strengthening community-level monitoring and maternal health care for pregnant indigenous women in Panama; providing support to indigenous women victims of gender-based violence in Colombia; and in Peru advising the Government on how to address the health and socio-economic challenges faced by indigenous populations in the context of COVID-19. Our work on censuses and household surveys has also contributed to make the situation of indigenous peoples visible in driving the formulation of those plans, for instance in Mexico and Venezuela; but most of all, we have advocated to ensure that indigenous peoples are at the table in finding solutions to COVID-19 and building forward better.

By centering our COVID-19 response on indigenous-led solutions and the specific risks and vulnerabilities indigenous peoples face, we will stand a better chance at building a sustainable, equitable, inclusive and resilient post-COVID world.

I thank you.