

Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with regard to indigenous human rights defenders

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 1 May 2017

The European Union would like to express its appreciation for the work of the Special Rapporteur and of the Expert Mechanism on the rights of indigenous peoples.

We welcome today's opportunity to dialogue on indigenous human rights defenders.

The European Union attaches great importance to the protection of human rights defenders (HRDs), including indigenous HRDs. In fact, the EU guidelines on HRDs specifically mention indigenous HRDs.

With the EU's Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for 2015 to 2019 the European Union has stepped up its support for HRDs, with enhanced emphasis on HRDs defending social, economic and cultural rights, labour rights and indigenous peoples, including in the context of land and climate change.

We are aware that indigenous HRDs constitute a disproportionate share of those targeted in violent attacks and killings.

Through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights the European Union provides funding in the form of urgent small grants to HRDs at risk. These grants are used to provide support, including emergency relocation, legal assistance, medical treatment and trial and prison monitoring. Annually the European Union supports approximately 150 HRDs.

In our bilateral cooperation with our partner countries we also discuss issues pertaining to HRDs and in some cases we raise individual cases of concern.

The work of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and other mandate holders of the Human Rights Council plays an important role when it comes to ensure international attention for the challenges faced by HRDs, including indigenous HRDs.

In conclusion, we would like to hear from the Special Rapporteur and the chair of EMRIP what in their view could be done to improve the protection of indigenous HRDs from violent attacks and killings.

Thank you.