



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

UNESCO Statement

on the occasion of the

the 18th Session of the United Nations

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

(Item 9 - Special theme: "Indigenous peoples'

Traditional knowledge, generation, transmission and protection")

Tuesday, 23 April 2019

Madame Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to present this statement on behalf of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) at this 18th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

UNESCO recognizes that sustaining and promoting a diversity of cultures, languages and knowledge systems is crucial to the attainment of Agenda 2030.

It is well understood that indigenous knowledge systems are an essential component in the global challenge to safeguard biological diversity and mitigate the impacts of climate change. UNESCO has been working for over 15 years with indigenous peoples to support the intergenerational transmission of indigenous understandings, skills and philosophies related to biodiversity and climate change through its Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) programme. The LINKS programme serves, for example, as the technical support unit on indigenous and local knowledge for IPBES.

Indigenous communities over the centuries have shaped and maintained some of the most outstanding cultural and natural environments in the world.

In 2017, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee noted the establishment of the *International Indigenous Peoples Forum for World Heritage* “as an important reflection platform on the involvement of Indigenous Peoples in the identification, conservation and management of World Heritage properties.”

The official launch of the Forum at the last 42nd session of the World Heritage Committee in 2018 represents a major step in engaging indigenous peoples from around the world in the field of World Heritage conservation.

Beyond its association with sites, indigenous knowledge is also embedded in oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, rituals and festive events, as well as inherited craftsmanship, which communities around the world transmit and enact as part of their intangible cultural heritage.

UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage emphasises the continued enactment of such knowledge-based practices by communities. Through the 2003 Convention, UNESCO works to safeguard these practices as a means of transmitting embodied knowledge systems and to ensure respect for, and raise awareness, of their importance.

This includes efforts to ensure their intergenerational transmission, including through formal and non-formal education systems. It is now well established that early mother tongue education is an essential component to ensure inclusive, and equitable quality education, as well as promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. UNESCO continues to work with its Member States across all regions to advocate and give technical support for early mother tongue and multilingual education.

Ladies and gentlemen, indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge requires understanding the cultural, scientific and educational contexts. UNESCO brings its work across multiple sectors to leverage an integrated and interconnected approach to the safeguarding of indigenous knowledge systems as guided by the UNESCO Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples.

UNESCO looks forward to continuing and expanding cooperation with indigenous peoples in all areas of its mandate.

I thank you for your attention.