

The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
12 – 16 June 2021

Arctic Dialogue

EU Intervention

The European Union thanks the EMRIP for its two valuable reports and for the opportunity to speak in this session.

Participation of indigenous peoples on issues affecting them is key part of UNDRIP. The EU supports participation of indigenous peoples in relevant human rights and development processes. Securing their full participation and upholding the principle of free prior and informed consent in all decisions affecting them is a core principle of EU policy, recognized in the EU action plan on human rights and democracy 2020 – 2024. We look forward to the upcoming intersessional roundtable on possible steps to enhance the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions at meetings of the Human Rights Council affecting them.

The situation for human rights defenders worldwide is extremely difficult. Individuals belonging to groups such as environmental, land and indigenous human rights defenders are targeted. In addition to criminalization, land grabbing and reprisals, new threats, such as unlawful digital surveillance and cyber-harassment, have proliferated. To reverse this critical trend, the EU has called upon non-EU countries to implement preventive measures, duly investigate killings and bring perpetrators to justice.

The EU emergency fund for human rights defenders at risk has supported over 1 200 human rights defenders and their family members since 2014, many of them defending environmental, land and indigenous peoples' rights as set out in the UNDRIP and in Human Rights Law. Global Europe, the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument will be key to promote and defend Human Rights and Democracy worldwide.

The EU continues to address indigenous peoples' rights in its human rights dialogues with non-EU countries. In Africa, EU delegations launched calls for proposals to help indigenous peoples establish FPIC protocols in the protected area of Messok Dja in the Republic of

Congo, and improve access to quality healthcare and education for indigenous peoples' minority communities in Kenya. In Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, calls were launched to support indigenous peoples and environmental defenders in becoming key actors in promoting social and environmental policies leading to sustainable development.

Particularly in this period marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, policies and practices should be developed in a cross-sectoral manner engaging all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples. Securing access to quality education and providing flexible and innovative distance learning opportunities has been a major focus for the EU. Language is an important transmitter of culture and heritage. Investment at national, local and community level is needed to preserve and revitalise indigenous cultures and languages. We emphasize bi- and multilingualism in the language development of each child and increasing support to States' measures in the field of education to increase knowledge of indigenous languages.

Thank you.