

45th Session of the Human Rights Council
Annual half-day panel discussion on the rights of indigenous peoples:
Protection of indigenous human rights defenders
Geneva, 23 September 2020
UN Women Liaison Office in Geneva

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you, Madam President.

UN Women is pleased to participate in today's panel discussion and welcomes this year's focus on the protection of indigenous human rights defenders.

UN Women recognizes indigenous women and girls as indispensable agents of change. Indigenous women human rights defenders play a vital role in protecting indigenous communities and defending their lands, territories and resources, but face particular challenges when exercising their right to participate in public life. In some instances, indigenous women human rights defenders have been branded as criminals and arrested on trumped up charges for non-criminal acts, while indigenous women's organizations face restrictive financial regulations which prevent them from receiving funding from international sources.

Indigenous women human rights defenders have also been subjected to severe forms of violence. Front Line Defenders report that 304 human rights defenders were killed globally in 2019 alone, of whom 13% were women and 40% were advocating for land rights, indigenous peoples' rights, and environmental rights. It is believed that the real numbers could be higher, because cases are often not recorded and rarely investigated. May we use this occasion to remember Máxima Acuña Atalaya, Berta Cáceres Flores, Macarena Valdés Muñoz and Cristiana Bautista Taquinás in their defence of water, land, territories, spiritual practices, traditional health systems, food sovereignty and the rights to self-determination and self-government of indigenous peoples.

UN Women calls on Member States to protect indigenous women human rights defenders and to create enabling environments in which indigenous human rights

defenders may carry out their work safely. UN Women remains determined to walk alongside indigenous women and girls in their quest to claim their rights and are committed to promoting the collective rights afforded to indigenous women and girls under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the individual rights that they hold under CEDAW and other human rights treaties.

I thank you.