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## Summary Notes of the United Nations Global Indigenous Youth Forum (UNGIYF)

**Methodology:** *The following summary report aims to offer a chronologically structured overview of the plenary sessions which took place at the 2023 UN Global Indigenous Youth Forum. As such, a detailed summary of each of the plenary sessions taking place throughout the week, as well as an overview of the Opening Ceremony, will be presented to the reader. As discussions were largely informal, this report is structured narratively and does not focus on specific individual statements.*

### **Executive Summary:**

The biennial **United Nations Global Indigenous Youth Forum (UNGIYF)** is the only Indigenous-related high-level Forum hosted by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In 2016 the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) issued a [report](#) that shed light on the alarming reality of self-inflicted harm and suicide rates amongst Indigenous Youth. Land grabbing, forced displacement, ecosystem degradation and the loss of their food and knowledge systems were amongst the causes. Many of these challenges are related to FAO mandate. Therefore, in 2017 [FAO Indigenous Peoples Unit](#) organized a meeting between the [Global Indigenous Youth Caucus](#) (GIYC) and the Organization's Senior management. FAO listened to the concerns, requests and proposals of the Youth and a year later, in 2018, UNDESA and UNPFII issued a recommendation to FAO for the creation of the UNGIYF. FAO and the GIYC worked together for 3 years to set up the Forum's Secretariat. The inaugural session of the Forum was held online in 2021. 136 Indigenous Youth participated and it resulted in the [Indigenous Youth Global Declaration on Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems](#).

The 2023 UN Global Indigenous Youth Forum (UNGIYF) was held in Rome – in the headquarter of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) – from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> of October. The second session of the UNGIYF served as the first in-person meeting of the Forum, which was held in the Nomad Indigenous Foodlab: a group of nomadic Saami tents that were declared as an Indigenous territory on FAO premises. The event has been co-organized by the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus (GIYC), the Association of World Reindeer Herders and the Nomad Indigenous Foodlab. It has been sponsored by Docip and hosted by FAO.

Over the course of this week, 186 Indigenous Youth from the 7 socio-cultural regions, FAO Member States, UN Agencies, academics and stakeholders from the private sector came together to discuss policies affecting the future of Indigenous Peoples' food and knowledge systems in the context of climate and biodiversity action, advance recommendations stemming from the [Rome Declaration on the Contribution of Indigenous Youth Towards a World Without Hunger](#) (resulting from the 2017 meeting between FAO and the GIYC and hereafter referred to as "the Rome Declaration"), share the results, experiences and expectations of the "My Food Vision is" campaign launched in 2022, as well as engage with stakeholders present at the World Food Forum (WFF) and establish a working

methodology in tandem with the Coalition on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems, as a way to advance the Coalition's work and that of the "My Food Vision is" campaign.

#### **Daily Proceedings:**

##### **16.10.23: No Plenary Sessions**

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of October, Indigenous delegates shared their regional priorities and concerns. They shed light on the dramatic impact of climate change on their food systems, specifically water pollution, and stressed the need to establish partnerships between FAO and Indigenous Peoples to preserve Indigenous Peoples food and knowledge systems and secure food sovereignty, both goals inextricably linked to the protection of Indigenous Peoples' land tenure rights, currently threatened by business operations, armed conflicts and natural disasters, which are forcing people out of their lands and disrupting their traditional ways of life and knowledge systems. Calls to increase Indigenous participation at the World Food Forum were also made.

Overall Monday October 16<sup>th</sup> served as a welcoming day, focusing largely on logistics for this week's proceedings. Co-Chairs and Advisors of the GIYC were introduced to participants, as well as the Caucus' Regional Focal Points who were also able to present regional problematics.

##### **17.10.23:**

##### **-High Level Opening Ceremony-**

**Mr. Maximo Torrero**, serving as facilitator invited **Mr. Qu Dongyu** (Director General, FAO) to welcome Indigenous Youth on behalf of FAO, reiterating FAO's commitment towards Indigenous Peoples. **Mr. Alvaro Lario** (President, International Fund for Agricultural Development, IFAD) also expressed IFAD's commitment towards implementing Indigenous Youth Declarations. **Mr. Carl Skau** (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Program, WFP) expressed the need to be part of the solution, instead of relying upon reactionary measures. To do so WFP highlighted the need to work in tandem with Indigenous Peoples, something which the organization was already doing in a number of countries. **Ms. Silje Karino Muotka** (President, Sami Parliament of Norway) evoked the role of Indigenous Youth, not as leaders of tomorrow but of today, adding that consuming Indigenous Peoples' Foods would be the single-most important act in maintaining Indigenous Peoples' cultures.

**H.E Morten von Hanno Aasland** (Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Norway to FAO) exhorted participants to listen to and take into account Indigenous Peoples' Voices, adding that combining traditional forms of knowledge with innovation could provide meaningful contributions in addressing challenges in food systems and sustainability. **Ms. Mai Thin Yumon** (Co-Chair, Global Indigenous Youth Caucus) acknowledged the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Indigenous Peoples Movement at the International Level (1923, Levi General Deskaheh comes to Geneva to attempt to have his Nation be recognized as such). Ms. Mai Thin Yumon further recommended advancing partnerships between Indigenous Peoples and International Agencies, further hoping that these could present reports on Indigenous Youth at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), as well as calling upon FAO to update their policy in a way that represents the continued partnership between the organization and Indigenous Peoples. **Mr. Dario Mejía Montalvo** (Chair, UNPFII) expressed his belief towards Indigenous Youth having an obligation to be optimistic in the face of the numerous challenges affecting the planet, he further encouraged UN agencies to actively continue supporting Indigenous Youth. **Ms. Antonina Gorbunova** (Vice-Chair, Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, EMRIP) evoked the need to expand the right of fishing, as well as recognize the

right to health for Indigenous Youth, highlighting the interwoven nature of land tenure and food security. The vice-chair further recommended increased participation in decision-making for Indigenous Peoples, as well as a monitoring mechanism to measure the implementation of UNDRIP. Providing the final high-level remarks, **H.E Miguel Jorge Garcia Winder** (Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Mexico to FAO & Chair of the Rome Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples) expressed his hopefulness towards Indigenous Youth having to build up peace, as his generation had failed to do so, although he mentioned that his generation would still happily provide advice and expertise to participants.

**Prof. José Esquinas-Alcázar**- Plant Genetic Resources & Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems delivered a keynote address in which he exhorted participants to 'take hold of the wheel again' and demonstrate to governments present that alternative pathways towards sustainable food systems can be achieved when cultural diversity is seen as integral in maintaining biodiversity. Prof. Alcazar further questioned the existence of a planetary multi-crisis, arguing that only a value crisis existed, calling upon Indigenous Youth present to take up the role of change-makers. Speaking more specifically about negotiations at the WFF, Prof. Alcazar acknowledged that FAO was more of a forum for governments, rather than for Peoples. However, using examples of Indigenous Peoples' tenacity in CBD and UNDRIP negotiations, Prof. Alcazar sought to demonstrate that positive change can occur, if changemakers believe themselves as such.

#### ***-Joint session of the Global Hub on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems & Dedicated Session on the Protection of Plant and Genetic Resources-***

Following the opening ceremony, experts from the **Global-Hub on Indigenous Peoples' food systems** gathered with Indigenous Youth to discuss how to shape the hub's future work and protect plant and genetic resources. Regarding the latter, speakers stressed the importance of tools to protect Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, like the Nagoya Protocol. Indigenous Youth expressed concerns about policies impacting their communities and lands developed without their contribution, to illustrate this, an Indigenous Woman from Alaska observed that after crude oil had been found, 44 out of the 300 million acres of Alaskan territory was given to Indigenous Peoples, she noted the hypocrisy of a government giving land to Indigenous Peoples to whom this land had already belonged to. A participant from Kenya also noted that Indigenous seed transfers had been made illegal in the country, another from India noting that farmers have struggled with raising high-yielding seeds in an environment where large multinational companies unscrupulously steal Indigenous seeds. Pollution, over-reliance of monoculture, as well as lack of safeguards towards protection from biopiracy were all seen as major challenges in all regions. They stressed the need for collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous policymakers and between Western and non-Western knowledge systems. In this sense, they called for equal recognition of traditional knowledge alongside Western science and emphasized the importance of continued research on Indigenous Peoples' food and knowledge systems to inform policy changes.

#### ***-Joint Session with WFF Youth Action Assembly-***

Similar concerns were raised in the meeting with the **WWF Youth Action Assembly** during which Indigenous Youth stressed the need to implement policies that respect traditional ways of life; demanded more space for the consultation of Indigenous Peoples and more encounters to address territorial and regional issues. They emphasized the necessity to receive more funds for the

implementation of Indigenous Youth projects and the transmission of traditional knowledge and proposed to launch a global action plan led by the Youth in 2024 to bring action to a next level and set concrete goals for change. Notably, Indigenous Peoples from Africa raised concerns about a lack of initiatives at the youth level, calling upon the African Union to facilitate the creation of sustainable food production systems which could be done by recognizing the value of traditional knowledge systems which do well to complete an objective approach reliant upon empirical research. Country/community-specific projects should serve not just in generating methodologies, but rather lead towards the creation of a global movement aimed at revitalizing Indigenous food systems which are inextricably linked to Indigenous land and identity and are exponentially and globally encroached upon by colonization, militarization, as well as conservation and climate change mitigation measures.

### ***-The Power of Indigenous-led Education-***

During the last session of the day, Indigenous youths shared their experiences of discrimination and resistance. They also presented initiatives related to indigenous education and entrepreneurship. Key points discussed included:

- The issue of conventional educational systems defining knowledge and intelligence in Western terms, neglecting other forms of knowledge that should also be recognized.
- The importance of developing the skills and capacities of Indigenous Youth to empower them to work for the wellbeing of their communities and the protection of their ecosystems.
- The challenge of tackling the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges within educational systems both at the global and local level.
- Governments' lack of compliance with their duty to protect the Indigenous Peoples' right to culturally appropriate education in their own language, enshrined both by the UNDRIP and the ILO Convention No. 169.

**18:10.23:**

### ***-My Food Vision Is... Keeping the Lifeline of Nutrition Alive/Dedicated Session on the Impact of Ultra-Processed Foods-***

["My Food Vision is"](#) is a campaign launched at the 2022 World Food Forum and led by the Indigenous Youth Caucus. With superposed hands which symbolize mutual respect, reciprocity, and a need to protect Indigenous Peoples' food systems, the campaign aims to address challenges faced by Indigenous Youth, combat climate change, as well as to provide Indigenous-led sustainable solutions towards achieving sustainable food systems; better production, better nutrition, better environment, and a better life are the campaign's 4 key messages. As one of the central outcomes of the 2022 World Food Forum, the "My Food Vision is" was a cornerstone of discussions during the Forum, placing an emphasis on a participative sharing of experiences, solutions, concerns, and solidarity.

The first session of the 18<sup>th</sup> of October focused on **the impact of ultra-processed food** and explored the **food visions of Indigenous Youth**. The main issues raised during the discussion were the need to create synergies between Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors, for instance through the creation of local food and seed banks as means to support Indigenous Peoples' food and knowledge systems. In this sense, other participants called for the promotion of Indigenous Peoples' foods both nationally and globally through proper labelling. More broadly, Indigenous Youth stressed the need for a comprehensive approach to address current challenges, which should consider not only biological, but

also cultural diversity. Finally, the session highlighted the importance of integrating traditional Indigenous Peoples' knowledge into legal frameworks to help ensure food sovereignty, sustainability, and resilience.

#### ***-Joint Session with the Hand in Hand Investment Forum-***

The second session of the day focused on the work of the **Hand-In-Hand Investment Forum** and the role it can play for Indigenous Peoples' communities. The forum was launched in 2019 and works directly with countries to tailor investment plans that meet each nation's specific needs. The plans are the result of interactive discussions and imply the creation of connections between investors and local stakeholders. Daniel Pierini, chair of this initiative, stressed that it prioritizes issues such as gender, Indigenous Peoples' communities, and environmental considerations. During the discussion, Indigenous Youth recommended the investment forum to engage with Indigenous Youth, considering them as allies rather than mere beneficiaries of the initiative. In this sense, they proposed the creation of an Indigenous Youth Advisory Committee within the initiative and stressed that Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) procedures shall be undertaken whenever the initiative funds projects affecting Indigenous Peoples. In the same direction, others suggested that the forum should invest in Indigenous-led food processing and small-scale food-related Indigenous businesses (examples: tuna bottling in Solomon Islands, coffee production and processing in Costa Rica) and fund learning opportunities for Indigenous Youth on how to market their products and get fair benefits from them.

#### ***-The Coalition on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems with the UN Global Indigenous Youth Forum-***

The third session brought together the Coalition on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems and the UN Global Indigenous Youth Forum. The [Coalition on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems](#) is a mechanism which emerged as an outcome of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit. Recognizing the value of Indigenous Peoples' food systems, the Coalition acts to facilitate Indigenous Peoples input and participation with FAO Members, the United Nations, the private sector, bilateral and multilateral development institutions, and all other actors to build healthy, equitable and sustainable food systems.

Ecuador and Panama announced their participation in the Coalition<sup>1</sup>, whereas Indigenous Youth advocated for increased representation within the group. They emphasized the need for a comprehensive Action Plan for Indigenous Youth to translate the coalition's goals into action. One of the proposed future initiatives involves urging national food safety authorities to revise regulations, respecting Indigenous Peoples' food practices, and recognizing their nutritional value.

The Global Indigenous Youth Caucus further recommended that the Coalition have a dedicated space for Indigenous Youth, whose participation could provide them with a consolidated mechanism within the Coalition, mindful of the fact that only participation can enable for concerns to be shared. The Global Indigenous Youth Caucus further called upon the Coalition to provide Indigenous Youth with an action plan which could complete pre-existing solutions being championed by Indigenous Youth at the grassroots level.

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<sup>1</sup> So far, the [Coalition of Indigenous Peoples' food systems](#) was made up of nine Member States: Canada, Dominican Republic, Finland, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Colombia and Costa Rica and seven Indigenous representatives from each of the socio-cultural regions of the world. The president of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples chairs the Coalition and the FAO Indigenous Peoples Unit has been appointed as Secretariat.

***-Indigenous Youth Strategy for the Implementation of the CBD Global Biodiversity Framework-***

Finally, during the session on the **Indigenous Youth's strategy for the implementation of the CBD Global Diversity Framework**, Indigenous Youth stated that COP16 on Biodiversity should adopt Indigenous indicators so that countries can more easily report on Indigenous Peoples' rights and that national and international actors should support and fund community-based mapping of Indigenous Peoples' territories. Germany invited Indigenous Youth to join the International Young Farmers Forum which will take place in January 2024, and FAO expressed its intention to use the recent-established sub-committee on fisheries management to re-evaluate Indigenous Peoples' role in this mission. FAO Biodiversity Office invited Indigenous Youth to reach out to them to discuss possible collaborations to deliver the GDF.

**19.10.23**

***-Climate Action and Indigenous Youth Strategies towards COP 28 & Beyond-***

Central to the discussions taking place around this session's theme was the recognition of the critical role Indigenous Peoples play in protecting biodiversity, as well as the important role they could play in climate mitigation action, when their free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) is taken into account by governments through the development of holistic partnerships at the communal and international levels.

Cited as major challenges, a general lack of funding towards Indigenous-led climate action policy and lack of representation within dedicated mechanisms towards climate mitigation, were both serving as compound effects when placed against a backdrop which sees Indigenous Peoples throughout the world be disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of climate change, and even more so when caused by illegal forms of extractions.

Addressing these issues would only be possible where Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Youth could take an active part in climate action, in an environment where the uniqueness of their experiences, livelihoods and forms of knowledges and science were respected and held up as equal in value to Western scientific methodologies. The role of governments in this aspect was critical as they needed to ensure that appropriately funded spaces could be developed in partnership with Indigenous Peoples whereby a process could only begin with the redressing of colonial legacies. Consultation at all levels formed a third element of the proposed way forwards, with a preferred approach towards consultation being bottom-up approaches which facilitated community-led initiatives.

With regards to the COP, Indigenous Youth called for greater inclusion in all climate-change-related discussions. Further calls were made to create increased funding opportunities for Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Youth to address climate change, this could be done by creating new methods of funding, but also expanding existing funds to make them more accessible, such as the Climate Loss and Damages Fund which today way only accessible to governments. Moving forward would also necessitate a combining consultation of Indigenous knowledge with scientific knowledge which could be fostered by a holistic process viewing climate change as something addressable by bottom-up processes, instead of top-down approaches which stifled community action.

***-Joint Session with the Science & Innovation Forum: Value Change for Survival – The Ice is Melting-***

This session put together members of FAO's Science and Innovation Forum, which interacted with Indigenous Youth, hoping to find alternative pathways towards sustainability of Indigenous food systems, as well as finding opportunities for Indigenous knowledge to complete or enrich scientific perspectives. As such, FAO's Science and Innovation Forum members hoped to capture Indigenous knowledge firmly rooted in community-led initiatives with the hope that such solutions could be considered by states in their elaboration of agrarian policies, as well as sustainability initiatives. Of the key messages which both sides could agree on was the propensity for Indigenous food systems to be far more resilient towards adverse effects, as well as the scarcity caused by modern food systems favouring monoculture. Overall, this session hoped to harmonize the community level with the international level, while both sides agreed on this matter, this could only be achieved by providing Indigenous Peoples, and especially Indigenous Youth, with avenues to present their own solutions, voice their concerns and have their voices be taken into account by states.

Indigenous Peoples food systems have survived for centuries, millennia in some cases, nevertheless accelerated climate change fueled by large scale extractions and unsustainable consumption habits are causing the West to commit, what Prof. Alcazar referred to as, a form of collective suicide affecting the entire planet. Indeed, nature was not considered as something which could be negotiated with and discussions, no matter how profound, would not yield fruit unless accompanied by actions.

Indigenous Youth should be considered as key actors in climate-change mitigation and adaptation practices, encouragements were made for Indigenous Youth to practice climate-adaptive slow food production as well. Specific measures should be taken at the national and international levels to promote Indigenous-led action, as well as elevating their voice and equipping them with the technology and associated capacities to propose innovative solutions, remaining mindful not to demonize scientific methodologies sourced from Indigenous Peoples' knowledge or from Western methodologies.

In addressing the grave impacts of climate change, Indigenous Youth called for the establishment of a protocol for biodiversity and Indigenous Peoples which could be funded by the FAO and established under the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD), it was also proposed that the CBD became a binding convention, much like had been done with the *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (ITPGRFA). It was further advised that a committee of Indigenous researchers be created, which would work alongside the FAO in informing the organization's innovation and science departments. Reiterating previous contributions, Indigenous Youth called upon the FAO to facilitate negotiations between member states and Indigenous Peoples, this should not be limited to conferences like these, but actual in-depth negotiations on specific subjects.

***-The Rome Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples with the UN Global Indigenous Youth Forum-***

This session was dedicated towards providing a platform to the Rome Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples (RGFIP), giving participants the opportunity to learn about the activities of the RGFIP and the Coalition on Indigenous Peoples Food Systems. While the RGFIP focused on improving coordination between member states on Indigenous Peoples issues at the FAO, essentially ensuring that Indigenous Peoples concerns are kept within FAO's agenda, the Coalition serves to design policies and other programs aimed at preserving and protecting Indigenous Peoples' food systems, ensuring that these can be applied at the country level. A point also raised was the fact that both groups could serve to mitigate the perceived distrust between Indigenous Peoples and governments, as **Ms. Silje Karine**

**Muotka** mentioned, politicians often addressed problems with Indigenous Peoples, who rather than being viewed as the problem should be viewed as solutions. Participants further lamented the fact, they were unable to interact with the panellists present, who left the session after delivering their statements.

Of the elements springing out of this discussion, calls for increased participation from under-represented regions such as Africa, Asia and the Pacific were made with an expanded group of friends ensuring wider representativity of Indigenous Peoples' issues. Notably, during the session Panama joined the Coalition, becoming its 11<sup>th</sup> member. Brazil is further considering adhesion.

Policy recommendations springing out of this session included calls for inclusion of Indigenous Peoples by governments when implementing and discussing policies directly related to them, calling for increased support of communal/grassroots level Indigenous Peoples' organizations, potentially aiding towards maintaining Indigenous Peoples as part of FAO's agenda, proposing trust-based forms of fundings to empower these localized projects while ensuring that they remain community-led, as well as calling upon the Rome Group of Friends to convince Nepal to end their government's perceived oppression of Indigenous Peoples in the country. Indigenous Youth further hoped for increased opportunities towards forging partnerships with FAO in supporting community-led actions towards improving Indigenous Peoples' food and knowledge systems.

## **Friday, October 20**

### ***-Indigenous Youth Press Conference-***

Presenting a draft of ***Rome Declaration on Safeguarding Future Generations in times of Food, Social, and Ecological Crisis***, the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus was able to interact with the Press, providing a summary of its content, its follow-up as well as a proposed implementation process.

Chief among concerns addressed by the Declaration is the necessity for unity in action, expectant that a unified Indigenous movement could serve to strengthen Indigenous Peoples' position when interacting with governments at local and international levels. Further calls to action at the grassroots level were made, mindful of the importance of bottom-up approaches. Indigenous Youth is committed towards implementing the Declaration and for seeing it put into action.

The Global Indigenous Youth Caucus was determined to be the main driving force towards integrating and disseminating the Declaration with specific sections seeking to address individual member states. Disseminating the Declaration would also entail integrating the Declaration within global initiatives, as well as UN-led planning initiatives.

The Declaration further hoped to strengthen community-led education towards Indigenous Peoples' food and knowledge systems, traditional forms of knowledge, as well as representation. The Global Indigenous Youth Caucus highlighted that achieving this would entail having Indigenous Youth favor informative actions/advocacy, instead of performative. The Caucus further highlighted the relevance of the UNGIYF. Forum leaders should additionally hold yearly follow-up meetings to ensure proper implementation of the Declaration, further hoping that a template for how this should be undertaken be created. Finally, participants called upon FAO secretariat to decolonize the space, the Global



Indigenous Youth Caucus committing themselves to ensure that the upcoming session be a safe space for Indigenous Peoples' voices.

***-Special joint debate and dedicated dialogue with the CFS and the Coalition of Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems.***

The last event of the II Session of the biennial UN Global Indigenous Youth Forum saw participants discussing potential collaborative efforts with the World Committee on World Food Safety (CFS) and the Coalition. Out of the main outcomes of this session, a reiterated call for unity stands out, both the CFS Chair and the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus highlighting the strength finding common ground could bring when having a unified Caucus position. Further calls were made to establish an Indigenous Peoples' Caucus at the CFS, with CFS agreements potentially useful to Indigenous Youth when interacting with governments at the international level, as well as advancing lobbying at the national level.

The Global Indigenous Youth Caucus further highlighted a good practice from IFAD, arguing that their steering committee included Indigenous Peoples representatives and that this enabled for consultation on a diverse range of items such as budgets and workplans. Stakeholders spoke in favour of integrating Indigenous Youth in their processes, with the Chair of CFS further adding that there should be a knowledge-policy interface, rather than the customarily used science-policy interface.