

Global Indigenous Youth Caucus

3. (a) Health

Thank you Mister Chair,

We, the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, understand the intersectionality of achieving wellness with the foundational need to establish fluent knowledge of our respective Indigenous world-views. Indigenous world-views (as stated in session 3, paragraph 20, have established the recommendation “on the protection and promotion of traditional knowledge”)—the feared, unwavering and steadfast understandings that endured violent colonial policies (including the Doctrine of Discovery)—are the key to restorative healing and consistent wellness of the Indigenous body and mind.

Therefore, we reaffirm the complementary nature of the Global Indigenous Women’s Caucus—our mothers’ and grandmothers’—recommendations, specifically the connection to the understanding that the Indigenous woman’s body is directly impacted by environmental extraction, ultimately influencing, defining, and determining their relationship to their children and their child’s developmental health and healing—which is us, the Indigenous youth of today. The bottom line is the understanding that **restoration to Indigenous bodies** is the point of the Forum, so **health** is the foundation since ‘Indigenous **health & healing**’ is recognizing that this is **health & healing** for the earth (and non-indigenous peoples) as well.

Based upon the recommendation of the first session, paragraph 31, that the Forum “intends to make Indigenous children and youth a focal point of its work in the years to come,” this year, we, the Indigenous youth proactively seek the following:

We reaffirm and emphasize the recommendation made during the 11th session in paragraph 11 to implement a five-year action agenda of the Secretary-General to address health issues. This is to “address the needs of the largest generation of young people the world has ever known” in addition to recognizing:

1. The urgency of HIV and sexual health education that promotes cultural sensitivity and privacy in health care for both sexes in pre and post testing conditions and disables vilification of current health care structures.

By reaffirming that “the Permanent Forum urges UNAIDS to ensure HIV prevention and AIDS care in Indigenous communities; to ensure participation of Indigenous Peoples in HIV policy and planning” (session 5, paragraph 18).

2. The revival of Indigenous knowledge of healing & health to affirm the interconnectedness of all things. The health of youth and Elders is also intergenerational and should be treated and respected as such.

By reaffirming that “the Forum recommends that the relevant agencies incorporate Indigenous healers and cultural perspectives on health and illness in policies, guidelines and programmes” (session 2, paragraph 63).

3. The prevention and urgency of preventing youth suicide (social and emotional well-being) by encouraging community organization for safe spaces especially with respect to support and acceptance for practices that are not heteronormative. This is also affected by the historic and ongoing implications and forced removal and displacement from our traditional territories due to climate change, human induced (state and corporate) extractive industries and natural disasters, which particularly affects the identity Indigenous youth.

The GIYC reiterates the “calling to attention the high rates of suicide among Indigenous youth in some countries” and reaffirms the “call on UNICEF and WHO to convene a meeting on youth suicide” (session 6, paragraph 65). Remove barriers of access for Indigenous communities in relation to basic health services and the promotion of mental health education as determined by Indigenous Peoples.

4. To promote & advocate for self-determination on health care systems to dismantle policies that perpetuate discrimination and violence against Indigenous Peoples and to achieve free accessible health care for all Indigenous Peoples with priority on rural and remote peoples regardless of the respective community’s political stance.

We reaffirm the practices leading up to the “best practices of integrating Indigenous traditional knowledge, medicine, health and other health practices” (session 4, paragraph 114).

We remind states that they are accountable to Indigenous Peoples as the sole interpreters of the implications of this document, its recommendations and the right to self determine our own health priorities.

We understand that collective restoration of Indigenous youth requires patience and constant efforts for progress and above all respectful diplomacy between all peoples, and we appreciate the space to discuss the changes we have deemed during our preparatory session to establish for youth creative freedom for our expression.

Respectfully,
GIYC