

**18th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
22 April - 3 May 2019**

Agenda item 9

**Special theme of session: Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge, generation,
transmission and protection**

EU Statement

The European Union is pleased to take part in today's discussion on "traditional knowledge, generation, transmission and protection" and would like to thank the PFII secretariat for their Note (E/C.19/2019/5) which provides a good overview of the opportunities and challenges associated with the protection of indigenous peoples' cultures and traditional knowledge.

The EU would like to approach today's discussion by focussing on three different elements: The first one relates to respecting cultural heritage and diversity; the second to sustainable development and the third focuses on the support for indigenous peoples' rights in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

As the EU, we consider indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge part of the world's cultural heritage and diversity, and we are deeply committed to international cooperation on safeguarding the world's cultural heritage and diversity.

As a party to the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions¹, the EU is committed to promoting the diversity of cultural expression as part of its international cultural relations. We believe that engagement in, and support to global inter-cultural dialogue, is not only instrumental for the protection of cultural heritage (including cultural and linguistic diversity), it can also contribute to addressing major global challenges, such as, for example, peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution, and countering violent extremism.

With regard to sustainable development, we nowadays tend to focus our attention on the 2030 Agenda and its sustainable development goals. But for today's discussion we should also recall the many developments that have taken place since the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples first entered the global agenda in conjunction with the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the related adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity. These developments have not been even or easy to achieve, but today there seems to be a universal recognition under the multilateral agreements on environment and sustainable development of the vital role of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge, innovations and practices. The EU's commitment to these developments within the multilateral environment agreements has been confirmed through our support to the establishment of the "Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform" during the Conference of Parties to the UN

¹ <http://en.unesco.org/creativity/convention/about/2005-convention-text>

Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris (COP 21) and the agreements on the Platform's facilitative working group at the COP 24 in Katowice last November.

This brings me to the third element, which is the EU's commitment to the implementation of UNDRIP. Our constant support has been reaffirmed in the recent EU Council Conclusions on Indigenous Peoples which put indigenous peoples within the frame of global sustainable development, while also prioritising the prohibition of discrimination as well as the importance of addressing the threats that indigenous peoples experience in the context of land management, environment and climate change.

The EU believes that the generation, transmission and protection of traditional knowledge is best pursued by focusing on these three strands of cultural heritage, sustainable development and environment protection, and the respect for indigenous peoples' rights. These three strands are intertwined and mutually dependent and their integration in all endeavours for safeguarding traditional knowledge provides for the best guarantees in ensuring generation, transmission and protection.

In this regard, and as we conclude, we would like to inform of some of the most recent developments which illustrate how the knowledge of indigenous peoples can play a role in concrete terms. In March this year, the EU decided to become a party to the International Agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the central Arctic Ocean. The preamble of this agreement makes a reference to the UNDRIP as well as to indigenous and local knowledge. Furthermore, the foreseen scientific research and the monitoring programme of the agreement stipulate the necessity of taking into account indigenous and local knowledge along with the work of scientific and technical organisations, bodies and programmes.

I thank you for your attention.

