



EUROPEAN UNION  
Permanent Delegation to the United Nations Office  
and other international organisations in Geneva

## UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

### **13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), 30 November – 4 December 2020**

*Regional meeting of The Arctic; Central and Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia*

### **EU Intervention**

Mme Chairperson,

The EU welcomes today's discussion. We regret that this year it is not possible for us to have a full EMRIP-session, allowing us to discuss the broader challenges faced by indigenous peoples around the world. In 2019, indigenous peoples lived in more than 90 countries across the globe, making up 6 % of the global population, but more than 15% of the world's poor. These numbers illustrate that the situation of indigenous peoples is relevant for all States and warrants international discussion.

We appreciate that EMRIP has developed this alternative concept of regional meetings and we are hopeful that this new format will be able to focus on challenges related specifically to the regions in question.

The situation of many indigenous peoples has only deteriorated against the backdrop of COVID-19 and it is therefore pertinent that EMRIP has decided this year to focus on *"the impact of COVID-19 on the rights of indigenous peoples"*.

In October this year, IWGIA and ILO released a report called *"The impact of COVID-19 on indigenous communities"*. The report relies on data shared by indigenous peoples in 11 different countries that have all

participated in the so-called “*Indigenous Navigator*”, an initiative that benefits from the support of the European Union.

The results of the report highlight that COVID-19 is having a differentiated impact on indigenous peoples, an impact which also varies from community to community. However, the report also identifies how pre-existing barriers in access to health, social security, and education have caused the pandemic to have a disproportional effect on indigenous peoples. Furthermore, the report shows that there is a rise in food insecurity, related to loss of livelihoods and lack of access to land and natural resources.

The array of negative social and economic consequences caused or exacerbated by the pandemic could dramatically change the trajectory towards achieving the SDGs, including for the world’s indigenous peoples. The EU believes that we must all work together to ensure that the immediate effects the pandemic is having on indigenous peoples will not turn permanent.

Mme Chairperson,

As the Secretary-General has highlighted, COVID-19 provides the world with an opportunity to Build Back Better. When it comes to creating a better world for indigenous peoples, seizing this opportunity will require that we address the underlying structural challenges that they face.

It will also require a close dialogue between States and indigenous peoples to identify the necessary measures most appropriate in their specific context.

And most importantly, it will require that we listen to indigenous peoples and acknowledge the problems they face. For this reason, we look very much forward to the testimonies of indigenous peoples at today’s meeting and to hear what they think can be - if not the solution then at least - the best way forward from here to tackle the impacts COVID-19 is having on their lives and livelihoods.

I thank you.

