



EUROPEAN UNION

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

**Human Rights Council**

**48th session**

**Annual half-day panel discussion on the rights of indigenous peoples**

**The situation of human rights of indigenous peoples facing the COVID-19 pandemic,  
with a special focus on the right to participation**

**28 September 2021**

**EU statement**

Chair,

The European Union welcomes the holding of this the timely discussion of human rights of indigenous peoples facing the COVID-19 pandemic, with a special focus on the right to participation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on indigenous peoples worldwide, both in terms of the virus itself and in measures taken to combat the pandemic. The EU is worried about the use of the pandemic and its restrictions to curtail indigenous peoples' rights to participation in decision-making and to consultation, allowing for mega-projects to take place on lands and territories traditionally inhabited and used by indigenous peoples without seeking their free, prior and informed consent. Access to land and natural resources is essential for indigenous peoples' culture and traditional medicine and for their ability to overcome the pandemic.

Reports prove that there is a direct link between indigenous peoples overcoming the pandemic and the right to participation. For this reason, the EU calls on all states to ensure the full, effective, equal and meaningful participation of indigenous peoples in all decision-making on issues affecting them, including in decision-making related to COVID-19 recovery

measures. In order to build back better from the pandemic, indigenous peoples' right to participation must be protected and respected.

Distinguished panelists, what are the biggest challenges to ensure the full, effective, equal and meaningful participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making related to COVID-19 measures?

Thank you.