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INFORMING ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

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The current situation of our planet is a warning to all of us regarding the fragility of the environment' balances.

We believe together that this is still an early warning and that action is possible to reverse the damages made to our Mother Earth. The role of human beings in her preservation is central.

Among the humanity, through their resilience and their lifestyles that are respectful of their environments, Indigenous Peoples show the way forward for the entire world population.

For this very special year we therefore wanted to put them afront one more time, giving them the freedom to explain with their own words how impacted they were

by the current pandemic but also how their demonstrated resilience allowed them to adapt to this new situation that affected the entire world population.

We contacted representatives from the 7 socio-economic regions to have the opportunity to read their testimonies. These are inspiring, relevant, and full of practical experience.

Docip stands by Indigenous Peoples' side with great pride, but also great humility, to support the recognition of their

rights and the respect of their ways of life.

We all hope that in the lessons learned from this troubled and tragic period, Indigenous Peoples' voices will have an important role to play and Docip will play its part in the diffusion or their messages.

Rémi Orsier
Docip Director



THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE REGIONS

AFRICA

*By the Association of Peuples Women
and Indigenous Peoples of Chad (AFPAT),
contact: Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim*

How did your community respond to the coronavirus situation?

At first, at the beginning of the pandemics, the COVID-19 situation in our country was shaped by information coming for all institutions, every day, with various restrictive measures and restrictions such as not to go out, closing the marketplaces, while other sources conveyed conflicting information. This information is limited to national languages, i.e. French and Arabic, and is broadcasted via mainstream media including tv, radio, circulars and social media. Yet, communities do not always speak these two official languages and they do not necessarily have access to these media.

According to the Mbororo Fulani communities in Chad, information regarding the COVID-19 and related prevention are not officially disseminated within indigenous communities. The M'bororo Fulani communities get information about the pandemics and its prevention orally via phone calls from the Fulani Women and Chad Indigenous Peoples Association – the AFPAT, or through word-of-mouth reaching their communities. Again, it is not usual for them to listen to the radio as some remote camps are out of radio signal reach. Even if they do, radio broadcasts about the pandemics are not available in Fula language.

To address this difficulty, the AFPAT, after making daily phone calls to convey information and thanks to the precious support of its partner, visited the communities around Lake Chad, to inform and raise awareness about the COVID-19 in Fula language. Posters with illustrations of the safety precautions were used as communication tools in this regard, and then offered to the communities. The AFPAT responded to the poorest families by distributing food and soap, as well as masks and a brief prevention training to the people who had to get out of the community to carry out their activities. The women leader of the community were given thermometers and also received a training on how to recognize the symptoms and which measures to be taken in case of a suspicion, as well as the AFPAT phone number for daily report.

Is traditional indigenous knowledge helpful to tackle this virus, and if so, which one?

Traditional indigenous knowledge is a matter of ancestral practices. It consists in the intake of beverages or in relying on simple actions, to prevent some seasonal diseases. To face this virus, however, traditional knowledge has not yet produced preventive remedies or suggested any protective behavior. Nonetheless, communities rely on the traditional knowledge to protect the elderly by isolating them and paying more attention to their daily routine as to avoid contacts outside of the community. In our culture, even in the case of common diseases such as malaria, triploid, etc., women take care of the men, children or other women. This has proven to be

efficient as women quickly picked up on the actions to be taken if there is a suspicion of pandemics within the community, and they will be able to use their traditional knowledge before alerting public health workers, in order to prevent the virus from spreading further.

Did you notice an increase in the violation of your rights by some stakeholders (armed forces, police, other communities, etc.)?

In implementing the measures established by the government, especially regarding the limitation of gathering and personal mobility, law enforcement officers, who, even before ripped indigenous peoples off, take advantage of the situation to regularly issue unfair fines to indigenous peoples. These exactions are too many to count, and usually consist in charges, or cattle or land grab. This goes against the communities' well-being and increase their existing fear. Communities are facing limitations of transhumance between the regions within Chad, due to regional border closures, which is not acceptable for cattle. The seasons will not wait for the pandemics to get from hot to cold or rainy. Even worse: cross-border transhumance is now impossible. So, fraud is becoming part of everyday life for communities who are just trying to maintain their livelihood.

Did you feel supported by the international community - taking for instance the statement by the High Commissioner of Human Rights for the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, the various EMRIP and UNPFII statements,

the report from the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples?

Within the AFPAT, we make sure that we communicate with community focal contacts on the communities' urgent needs and their local initiatives in preventing the COVID-19 pandemics. Our actions have attracted attention from partners, who decided to finance training/educational activities about the COVID-19 pandemics, as well as healthcare and protection equipment, and food support, among others.

We regularly speak with community leaders to inform them of the decisions taken by the government. With regard to the international community and especially the statements from international institutions, it has been of no help so far because the text does not respond to the pressing issues faced by communities. We need financial resources and technical support to help our communities. Moreover, we have not yet received any international help. As the statements are made in languages that our communities do not understand, very few of our requests reach the government. Advocacy panels organized by the AFPAT still bring some hope of communicating about our situation, but they did not receive the answers that our communities expected, in particular about the access to transhumance corridors, water, grazing land, hospitals, etc. So, the international community does not support Chad Indigenous Peoples.

Did you have the opportunity to take part in the various videoconferences organized during the pandemics?

Chad State limited all social networks at the time of the pandemics, while we need the internet, it is only possible to get a connection in the capital city via a VPN, but in the countryside, even with a VPN there is no connection, and it is very expensive so it requires an additional investment. Besides, as mentioned previously, antennas and even electricity remain a luxury service for the communities who do not have access to it. So, the Mbororo Fulani indigenous peoples did not participate in any videoconference during this period.

But, through AFPAT, one of our members had to leave Chad for Europe to get access to this new virtual world, and take part in videoconferences or teleconferences, etc. It was also an increased workload for her to coordinate from afar what happens in our communities. She must

work in different languages and at different hours because virtual meetings are scheduled on various time zones. It completely changes the way our organization work. Yes, it is easier to speak with everyone, but it is not a good thing because this virtual world is not ours and the connection with the environment as well as human contact is much needed for indigenous peoples and for our community. We are prisoners of this pandemics and we fear that our lifestyle will be even more threatened by these new work habits, that for now, do not bring any solid solutions in regard to the urgent needs of our communities.

Did you notice a decrease in your participation in national, regional or international spaces because of the pandemics?

The measures taken by the governments due to the pandemics, with regard to airspace traffic and gathering, have resulted in the interruption of regional, national and international meetings. We participate in next to none physical meeting and very few virtual meetings, as explained previously. These participations are limited for us as they rely on the availability of a few persons at the national level and one single person at the international level; and are limited to emails and WhatsApp at the regional level.

Do you think that there has been a setback in the Indigenous Peoples rights during this period or, on the contrary has there been progress?

With the interruption of legal activities, it is not possible to report any case of land grabbing or other cases of violation of our rights during this period of pandemics. On the social aspect, because they fear discrimination from their communities, persons with symptoms of the disease or their relatives rather keep silent than call health authorities for care. Thus, in our opinion, the rights of Indigenous Peoples have unfortunately suffered a setback in this time of pandemics.

What are the best practices that you have noticed during this period with regard to the development of your community?

Chad Indigenous Peoples develop most of their activities in the camps (breeding, farming, transforming local products, etc.)

and have external contacts only when strictly necessary, thus avoiding large gathering or group movements, that become corridors for the virus to spread. Indeed, to compensate for the markets' shutdown, indigenous peoples have tied relationships with shopkeepers in large cities around the camps to procure essential goods.

This solution could be enhanced with a trade partnership with sedentary merchants, for the purpose of, potentially, supplying and trading products to the benefit of all. However, this is not working well, because trade requires a cash flow and is not based on exchanging goods.

How do you foresee the indigenous participation in the international arena within the next year?

The organizations' (national or international) downturn in activities of promotion and dissemination of indigenous peoples' rights will impact the indigenous participation in the international arena. It is obvious that within a year from now, the momentum and fervour showed by the indigenous peoples in communicating about their rights will decrease. Scientists say that the

“Communities are facing limitations of transhumance between the regions within Chad, due to regional border closures, which is not acceptable for cattle. The seasons will not wait for the pandemics to get from hot to cold or rainy. Even worse: cross-border transhumance is now impossible. So, fraud is becoming part of everyday life for communities who are just trying to maintain their livelihood.”

vaccine will not be available before a year. This will marginalize even more indigenous peoples and limit their participation at the international level.

Which of the fundamental indigenous peoples' rights were most impacted by the pandemics, in your opinion?

Given that this community lives in the rural world, and that its daily survival depends on the exchange of goods in marketplaces, the shutdown of the markets severely affects the life of indigenous peoples, more particularly their food safety. By the way, Chad is one of the countries in a phase of severe food insecurity according to

the 2020 map of the World Food Program - WFP. The restrictions of transhumance due to the borders closure between the country's regions as well as the neighbouring countries is a breach of the communities' land right and a constraint to their lifestyle. Besides, as all information about COVID-19 is either in French or Arabic and only available via tv or radio, inaccessibility to information makes the indigenous peoples even more vulnerable. Scarcity of drinking water in the camps and around it makes it impossible to comply with health instructions to contain the virus, especially washing hands. The distance to health facilities is a potential risk for the whole community, if there is an outbreak of the disease, because there is no special unit for medical care. So, everyone will be exposed.

To this day, officially, the authorities have taken no action to include the indigenous peoples in the welfare programs relative to the COVID-19 pandemics. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemics is adding to their vulnerability, when they already lacked drinking water, and especially now that they cannot go to the markets to get their essential good supplies.

Finally, according to the results recorded by the AFPAT in its advocacy for the promotion and dissemination of the rights of indigenous peoples, the programs or projects regarding indigenous peoples are not planned in consultation with them; as a consequence, these projects do not really benefit the community.

NORTH AMERICA

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN NORTH AMERICA

*By Andrea Carmen & Rochelle Diver,
International Indian Treaty Council*

Indigenous Peoples in North America are profoundly concerned about the spread of the COVID-19 virus in their territories and the resulting loss of life and related impacts on their communities, families, and future generations. We are reminded, as we face this new crisis, the devastating impacts on our Peoples of past pandemics brought in by European and American settlers, miners, and missionaries. In some cases, such as case of the smallpox-infected

blankets brought by the government as "gifts" to Indian Nations, were purposely introduced as acts of genocide.

Indigenous Peoples in North America (the United States and Canada) have suffered violations of their inherent right to health for centuries, making them disproportionately vulnerable to new infectious diseases. Resource exploitation, destruction of traditional food systems and toxic contamination of Indigenous Peoples' lands, air, and waters have caused disproportionate disease rates including cancers and asthma which compromise immune and respiratory systems among all ages. Poverty, overcrowding, and long-standing lack of access to health care and even potable water in some remote communities in both the US and Canada, have further increased vulnerabilities.

The current COVID-19 crisis highlights these ongoing human rights violations as Indigenous Peoples have the highest rates of deaths among all ages. Tragically, the highest death rates are among Indigenous elders, who are the wisdom, language and knowledge holders for their Nations. Even before the pandemic hit, many Native Nations were considered "food deserts", with limited access to nutritious and traditionally used foods in the best of times in addition to basic food staples. For example, in Southern Arizona, the Tohono O'odham Nation, with the 2nd largest federally recognized land base of 2.8 million (the size of the US State of Connecticut) acres, has only one grocery store. The lack of access to traditional foods and increasing dependency on high-sugar, high fat foods, has resulted in diet-related illnesses, particularly diabetes. Native Americans have the highest prevalence of this deadly and debilitating disease, which in some tribes affects up to 80% of the members, further increasing their vulnerabilities to COVID-19 and other viruses. As many local grocery stores were depleted at the start of pandemic, Indigenous Peoples were also experiencing the impacts of Climate Change causing extreme heat waves and droughts as they struggled to find sources of fresh, safe, and healthy foods.

In the Southwest region of the US, the Diné (Navajo) Nation has been particularly hard hit. The Navajo Nation has the largest federally recognized land base of any Indigenous Nation in the US. Despite being in a "developed" country, approximately 30% of the Nation's citizens live in remote areas without running water and/or electricity.

Many live hours from the nearest health care clinics. During the first wave of the pandemic, in May 2020, the Navajo Nation surpassed the states of New Jersey and New York in the number of cases per capita. As of this release, as cases are spiking again all over the US and Canada, it remains one of the most impacted Indigenous Nations in the US. On November 11th, a statement issued by Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez confirmed that 34 communities on the Navajo reservation have "uncontrolled spread" of Covid-19. As the pandemic's impacts were increasing in April 2020, Elder Duane "Chili" Yazzie, President of the Shiprock Chapter of the Navajo Nation who helped to coordinate community relief efforts in his regions, stressed that, "We [the Diné] have weakened immune systems because of our heart and respiratory conditions, which are caused in large part by breathing carbon polluted air from power plants all of our lives and living amongst abandoned uranium and massive coal strip mines. We live in a national energy sacrifice zone and because of our overcrowded housing situation, we are more susceptible to catch the virus."

While the disproportional impacts highlight the outcomes of ongoing and past human rights violations. In addition, new human rights violations directly impacting Indigenous Peoples are being carried out by both the US and Canada, using the COVID-19 pandemic as justification. For example, the pandemic has been used by American and Canadian federal and provincial governments and corporations to roll back environmental safeguards and fast track development projects that Indigenous Peoples have long opposed.

In Canada on April 1st, 2020, the Alberta Provincial government committed over 1 billion Canadian dollars for the construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline to bring tar sands oil from Alberta through the US heartland, committing to begin construction immediately despite the pandemic. This transnational pipeline is strongly opposed by Indigenous Peoples all along its route, as a violation of their cultural, environmental, and Treaty rights. Alberta's Energy Minister actually told an industry group that this is a good time to build tar-sands-oil pipelines because coronavirus restrictions limit gatherings of protesters to 15 people!

In March 2020, the state of South Dakota USA along the proposed Keystone XL pipeline route long opposed by Indigenous Peoples in both US and Canada, also adopted

“anti-protest” laws expanding the definition of “critical infrastructure” to include oil, gas and utility equipment, and declaring “substantial interruption or impairment” of that equipment as a felony.

That month a federal judge ruled that California can pursue climate litigation against fossil fuel companies in state court, where its chances of success are far better

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than at the federal level. Also in May, a federal judge ruled in favor of a bid to move forward with a uranium mine south of the Grand Canyon, in opposition to the long standing position of the Havasupai Tribe whose lands, waters and sacred sites would be directly impacted.

Other recent environmental rollbacks by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), happened behind closed doors while impacted communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous were locked down or otherwise distracted by the pandemics growing toll. These included easing fuel-efficiency standards for new cars, freezing rules for soot air pollution, proposals to drop review requirements for environmental toxics including liquefied natural gas terminals and leasing public property to oil and gas companies to increase extractive activities. The Trump administration’s utter lack of action to curb the growing health impacts of the pandemic in the US was not accompanied by lack of attention to opportunities to further weaken any environmental protections which still in place after 3 years of its anti-environment policies.

In the US, efforts by some Tribal Nations to protect their own Tribal Citizens from infection based on their Treaty rights were met with government repression. On May 8th 2020 the governor of the State of South

Dakota, Trump ally Kristi Noem, challenged the Tribal sovereignty and Treaty rights of the Oglala Lakota Nation and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in an official letter threatening them with legal action if they did not remove checkpoints on state roads leading into their lands to protect their citizens from exposure to COVID-19. On June 22, Cheyenne River Chairman Harold Frazier reported that the US federal Bureau of Indian Affairs was threatening to withdraw law enforcement funding if he does not remove the checkpoints.” These Tribal Nations were not intimidated by these threats and maintained the checkpoints for the protection of their citizens and the assertion of their Treaty Rights.

In another example also in May 2020, a federal judge ruled in favor of a bid to move forward with a uranium mine south of the Grand Canyon, in opposition

to the long standing position of the Havasupai Tribe whose lands, waters and sacred sites would be directly impacted.

In the face of the mounting crisis and the lack of positive and respectful government responses, Indigenous Peoples and Nations in North America have turned to their own solutions, increasing efforts to re-establish and expand their food sovereignty and the use of traditional medicines and healing practices. Our traditional knowledge holders and practitioners have presented solutions to mitigate impacts, to better protect us from disease and to prepare our future generations for a secure and sustainable future. Indigenous Peoples from throughout North America have confirmed that restoring our medicines and traditional foods as well as halting the environmental contamination of our lands, air and waters, are essential for protecting ourselves and providing food security and long-term health for our Peoples.

Local efforts by Indigenous community members, such as the Navajo-Hopi COVID Relief Effort based in Gallup, New Mexico were launched to take donated food to vulnerable families and elders, when local off-reservation stores were depleted or were even closed to Navajo families from the reservation as a response to the pandemic. Another example of response to the food crisis faced by Indigenous Peoples,

the “Native Seed and Food Sovereignty Project for COVID-19 Relief” was launched in Tucson Arizona, in collaboration with the International Indian Treaty Council, Yoemem Tekia Foundation (YTF), San Xavier Coop Farm (SXCF), and the O’odham Mutual and Cultural Aid (OMCA) based in and adjacent to the Pascua Yaqui and Tohono O’odham Nations. The project, which has recently expanded to include other organizations and communities, supports Indigenous Peoples’ food sovereignty and restoration of traditional seed, food and medicinal plant use.

The project also facilitates and supports the establishment of family and community gardens for reservation households to supply and supplement their food needs and provide access to fresh traditionally grown foods (beans, squash, chiles, corn etc.). IITC is working with these partners to obtain seed sources; help build distribution networks for food, seeds, and seedlings; organize inter-tribal exchange of skills, knowledge, seeds and seedlings; distribute emergency meals and food boxes; develop and expand traditional seed banks; increase youth involvement in traditional food production and inter-generational knowledge sharing; and construct and enhance family and community gardens through coordination of the involved projects in response to the pandemic and for long-term health and resiliency.

In North America and around the world, Indigenous Peoples hold the solutions and tools to successfully steward our lands and protect the health of our peoples and communities. However, now, more than ever, the rights of Indigenous Peoples as affirmed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, must be respected in all efforts to address this crisis. These include our rights to the productive capacity of our environments and a halt to toxic contamination of our lands; rights to health including both equal access to state health care services and to our traditional medicines and practices; Free, Prior and informed consent regarding both development and administrative measures; and the right to participate in decision-making regarding the planning, development, and implementation of programs aimed at safeguarding the health of our Peoples that will build sustainable, resilient and just solutions, now and post COVID.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples dedicated his annual report to the UN General Assembly

to the impacts of the COVID-19 on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. The report gives an overview of existing initiatives undertaken by Indigenous Peoples and others to ensure that the rights and needs of Indigenous Peoples are considered, addressed and respected in the fight against the pandemic. Please find the report, and the global submissions here¹.

Finally, to further these discussions and support Native Nations in North America, the International Indian Treaty Council had launched two series of weekly webinars focusing on the COVID-19 Pandemic and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, beginning on Friday, April 24th and October 9th, 2020. Topics addressed by Indigenous Peoples representatives from North America and other regions included Food Sovereignty, Environmental Health and Justice, the links between COVID-19 and the Climate Crisis, the impacts of the pandemic on Indigenous women, children and persons with disabilities, and perspectives of Indigenous youth. To listen to the recordings of these webinars we invite you to visit IITC's web site at www.iitc.org.

With prayers for the health and well-being of all our relations, and with words from International Chief Wilton Littlechild, who reports that cases are also now rising in Maskwacis, where his Ermineskin Cree Nation and three other First Nations are located in Alberta, Canada where remains positive that strict measures to lockdown the Indigenous territory as well traditional ceremonies and health knowledge will protect his Nation in the long run.

“One of the impacts of the pandemic is that Indigenous rights were overridden or ignored by government policy makers. They didn't recognize our knowledge and traditional practices as real solutions. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Article 24 affirms our rights to our traditional medicines and practices including healing ceremonies and other traditional health knowledge. The government tried to stop our Sundances, one of most important healing ceremonies for our Cree Nation. But we carried them out anyway, with physical distancing and other measures that were put in place by our own ceremonial leaders. Yes, this is a health crisis and an economic crisis, but from our perspective, this is also a spiritual crisis. This understanding presents the solution: When Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional knowledge are respected, we can be a significant part of this solution.”

EASTERN EUROPE, THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AND THE ARCTIC

THE COVID 19 IMPACT ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE RUSSIAN ARCTIC, SIBERIA AND FAR EAST

*By Rodion Sulyandziga, Ph.D., Director,
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The COVID-19 pandemic hit Russia at the end of March 2020. The Russian Federation is a vast country that has weak and expensive transport linkages between regions. That prevented the virus's quick spread in the Russian Arctic, Siberia, and Far East territories where indigenous small-numbered peoples live. Fortunately, there were not many disease outbreaks in indigenous communities because of their remoteness and the implemented quarantine measures. However, after some time, the virus had come to remote indigenous territories. Extractive companies, as they involve many shift workers, became the primary source of the COVID-19 on indigenous peoples' territories in Russia.

The country's health care system was not prepared well for the virus spread as it was reformed recently, which resulted in a catastrophic reduction of the medical facilities, especially in rural and remote regions that are home to indigenous peoples.

The response measures developed by the Russian authorities in a top-down manner with no consultations with affected communities put some indigenous peoples in a stressful situation because of the cut connections between different parts of the society. For example, some reindeer herders were not available to visit urbanized areas to buy supplies and sell traditional economy's products during the quarantine restrictions.

Eighty percent of the Russian Arctic's population lives in cities. Considering that three-fourth of indigenous peoples live there in rural areas, we can acknowledge that the medical reform in Russia affected the indigenous population of small villages in the remote regions of the Russian Arctic worst.

We must also consider that indigenous peoples' health in Russia is far worse than the country's general population's health. Social diseases are widespread in the indigenous communities in Russia, including alcoholism and tuberculosis (TB). For example, the TB rate in regions where indigenous peoples live is 9,5% higher than the Russian average, and in some areas like Chukotka autonomous okrug, it is higher twice. The mortality rate from TB, which is 4,5 times higher than the Russian average, is an even more eloquent factor of the health system's poor condition in the remote regions where indigenous peoples live.

The internal messages from inside the Russian medical community showed that the healthcare system was generally weak prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic. If big cities like Moscow reacted fast to the new challenge, the local authorities in remote areas, where indigenous peoples live, had no resources to respond appropriately to the virus spread. The federal Government tried to react to the remote regions' needs and sent their military field hospitals, organized by the Russian Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Emergency Situation. They built such hospitals in Zabaikalsk, Krasnoyarsk, Murmansk, and some other regions. However, in some cases, these efforts led to the higher spread of the virus. For example, the Kamchatka region's mass virus infection started among constructors of the new military hospital invited by the Ministry of defense from the other areas of Russia.

In general, the indigenous territories' remoteness became the great advantage of the local indigenous communities during the first phase of the COVID-19 spreading in Russia. However, at a later stage (for example, during the potential second wave of the virus), the remote indigenous communities' closed nature could become an aggravating factor that promotes the virus spreading among the local population.

President Putin and the Russian Government declared several times the measures to combat the crisis, including the financial measures of support of the Russian citizens and business. In addition to the closure of borders with other states, the Russian Government banned public events and free walking in the Russian cities since the end of March. Since then, the Russian citizens only allowed out to buy food or medicines or to walk pets up to a radius of 100 meters from their homes.

Residents of the capital and several other Russian regions were also required to apply for a digital pass before using their cars or public transport.

A distinctive feature of the Russian quarantine measures, during which most public activities were banned, became the introduction of the "Non-working days" and "Self-imposed isolation" regimes that do not exist in the Russian legislation. These regimes were introduced by the special presidential decree and further by several extraordinary legal acts of the federal and regional governments instead of the legit and well-recognized "The Quarantine" and "The State of Emergency" legal frameworks, which were existed in the Russian legislation before.

According to the "Non-working days" and "Self-imposed isolation" modes, workers who were not involved in sensitive and critical public services and production (like medical workers, food producers, or police officers) must "self-isolate" themselves at their homes but with a continuation of paying full salaries by their employers. According to experts in labor legislation, this was done by the Government to do not bear financial obligations to the Russian citizens for almost two months of their forced lockdown.

In this situation, workers who receive the state's salaries or work for big corporations did not receive too much harm. Their employers continued to pay them wages during the lockdown. However, this quasi-legal regulation affected the small business negatively, both entrepreneurs and their employees. The small business owners could not pay salaries as their business was stopped, and their workers did not receive any payments.

The Russian Government did not support the small business and the country's general population except for several modest steps like postponing some obligatory tax payments, payment of 10 thousand rubles/130 Euros till families with children, restructuring of home mortgage loans, and some others financial instruments. Those businesses which not fired staff received the financial support from the state and only according to the lowest state's rate (12 310 rub/160 Euro per worker per month as a subsistence rate), which is not cover the real salaries in most sectors of the economy (not to mention other obligatory operative payments, such as rental of premises, pays for utilities, cost of loans, etc.)

A lot of businesspeople also note that they will not receive the state's financial support in the future as they will have to bankrupt their business because of the economy crushing. Thus, millions of workers and small business entrepreneurs did not receive salaries from their employers or any state payments.

At the same time, all stakeholders mentioned significant bureaucratic obstacles to receive unemployment benefits or another state's payments as well as the tendency of the bureaucrats to reduce the obligatory state's payments to people. There were many cases around the country when people could not receive the promised state's payments or received severely reduced payments than officially promised ones.

The indigenous peoples' ability to receive the state's compensation benefits for the lost revenues is even lower because of the lower education level, insufficient access to relevant information, and poor infrastructure in remote villages. It is also worth saying that a substantial stake of indigenous peoples' representatives works in traditional economies and informal sectors without engaging in official employment.

These groups cannot claim unemployment benefits or apply for any other kind of financial assistance from the state, which only extends to those on the official payroll.

The traditional for Russia gender distribution of employment among indigenous peoples also gives its input into the unequal allocation of the state's compensation benefits in indigenous communities.

In Russia, indigenous women are more involved in economic sectors which financed by the state budget by one or another way like working in communities' schools, kindergartens, administrations, medical facilities, while less urbanized indigenous men more involved into traditional economies outside settlements, like hunting, fishing, reindeer herding. In the situation of the "self-imposed isolation" declared by President Putin, persons who

officially work for the state have much more chances to receive compensation payments than those who have no official employment or work for themselves.

The introduced quarantine measures have also severely disrupted indigenous-owned businesses in communities, their economic development, and their trade relations with buyers of the indigenous peoples' traditional goods like fish and reindeer meat, which put them at risk of

"A significant challenge became for indigenous communities the policy of distance learning in schools introduced by Russian authorities this spring as a COVID-19 response measure. Online education became an insurmountable problem for many indigenous children in remote rural areas due to limitations with internet access, lack of communication devices, high price for communication services, and lack of school personnel experience. Many remote indigenous villages have no Internet connexion."

falling deeper into economic isolation. Decisions on quarantine measures in Russia, which were developed in a top-down manner with no consultations with affected communities, also violated the freedom of movement, which for many indigenous peoples, especially for nomadic ones, more essential than for the population of urbanized areas.

A significant challenge became for indigenous communities the policy of distance learning in schools introduced by Russian authorities this spring as a COVID-19 response measure. Online education became an insurmountable problem for many indigenous children in remote rural areas due to limitations with internet access, lack of communication devices, high price for communication services, and lack of school personnel experience.

¹ | https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IPeoples/SRIndigenousPeoples/Pages/Callforinput_COVID19.aspx

Many remote indigenous villages have no Internet connection. For example, about a third of schools in Yakutia was forced to continue offline education after the Federal Government issued an order on distance online school education. Some economically developed regions, like Yamal, rich by oil and gas, where Nenets indigenous people live, were able to provide school laptops for every school student. In others, they were forced to use phones or visit schools to receive papers.

The Government's COVID-19 response measures increase the regional inequalities between indigenous groups in different regions. For example, during their forced break in school learning, school children in Yamal received "emergency quarantine food packages", which could be comparable with best experiences in Western countries. In other regions where indigenous peoples live, the school "food packages" were much more modest.

We could also consider several special response measures of the Russian authorities to protect and support indigenous communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Yamal, local authorities helped to provide food and essential goods for the remote villages and pay additional payments for reindeer herders to support them during the COVID-19 breakout. Regional authorities also decided to offer subsidies to indigenous communities involved in touristic business "to modernize basic infrastructure" and create alternative touristic programs for the local Yamal residents who could not leave the region for summer vacations because of the COVID-19 restrictions. Moreover, local volunteers published leaflets on virus danger and prophylactic measures on the Nenets language.

In Khabarovsk Krai, reacting to the emergency in Borodskoye village, regional authorities sent the medical troop to help the local hospital fight the virus. They organized the total disinfection of the local public premises.

In Kamchatka, the indigenous communities, reacting to the reduction of the touristic flow from other Russian regions and from abroad, decided "to refocus the touristic activities on internal tourism" and provide cheaper programs for residents of the Kamchatka cities who are also not able to leave the peninsula for summer vacations. In several regions, including

Taimyr region, local authorities sent additional mobile medical troops to remote villages for checking the health of the indigenous residents, including the testing for COVID-19.

Regarding special COVID-19 measures towards the indigenous peoples, the Federal Government limited itself by sending a letter of information to the regional authorities about the danger of the virus pandemic for indigenous communities. In this letter, the Russian Federal Agency of Ethnic Affairs (FAEA) stated that due to the remoteness of indigenous peoples' communities, their low social mobility, and demanding access to relevant information and public services, there is a health threat not only to separate persons but also for the small numbered indigenous peoples as a whole entities.

In this regard, the Federal Agency asked the regions' authorities to pay attention to sustainable communication with remote indigenous communities, to monitor their health status, essential goods supplies, and access to public services, including medical services and distance learning for schoolchildren.

Also, Russia prepared a report on COVID-19 in the Arctic regions for the Arctic Council. They mentioned the potential difficulties for indigenous peoples who may suffer from the virus under conditions of natural isolation of indigenous communities in the High North and the lack of immune resistance. But the report's content to the Arctic Council remained unfortunately unknown to the general public as it was not published online.

Simultaneously, authorities tried to use the COVID-19 anti-crisis measures to promote their political agenda, paying no attention to indigenous peoples' opinions and their free, prior, and informed consent. For example, in the middle of May, authorities of the oil-rich Nenets autonomous okrug and the economically weak Arkhangelsk oblast signed the agreement on merging these two regions into a united sub-federal entity. They argued this initiative by falling of the oil prices on the world's market because of the COVID-19 crisis. According to their arguments, both regions come to an unfortunate economic situation, and only merging the regions could save the local economy.

Regional authorities declared the process of merging without any prior consultations

with Nenets indigenous people and other non-indigenous populations. Nenets okrug's residents, both indigenous and non-indigenous, started protest actions, despite the prohibition of the mass gatherings in the region because of the COVID-19 quarantine measures.

After several weeks of confrontation, authorities declared that they "postpone the process" of political merging of two regions and start "to work out a joint program of the economic and social development."

Nenets indigenous people make up about 18% of the Nenets autonomous okrug's regional population, which is a rather good percentage for Russia. However, according to independent researchers, the main power which pushed the authorities to step back became the mass protests of the non-indigenous population of the regional center Naryan-Mar as those people would lose their oil incomes in case of the regions' union.

Another mass trend of social life digitalizing during the forced quarantine must be studied. A lot of public events are organized now online, and it influences the right of indigenous peoples to free, prior, and informed consent. Many companies, which extract natural resources on indigenous peoples lands, organize public events, including public hearings on the web, because of the COVID-19 restrictions. Considering the low access of indigenous communities to the Internet, it could negatively reflect their rights on lands and participation in decision making.

In conclusion, we must say that Indigenous peoples of the Russian Arctic, Siberia, and the Far East are a vulnerable group that did not suffer much from the COVID-19 during the first wave in spring 2020 because of the traditional indigenous territories' remoteness. Simultaneously, indigenous communities in Russia were indirectly hit by the pandemic because of the challenges connected with the state's response measures. The extractive business which supported indigenous communities through charitable programs reduced such support because of the economic difficulties.

The COVID-19 pandemic reflected negatively on the indigenous peoples' sustainable development and added additional challenges to implementing their collective rights on lands, resources, economic

development, and self-determination. The older generations of indigenous peoples who are traditional knowledge holders are under a particular threat of the virus spread. In combination with other negative global factors like Economic Crisis or Climate Change, it could be a significant threat to indigenous cultures' very existence.

The response measures implemented by the Russian Government put some indigenous communities in a stressful situation because of the cut connections between different parts of society. According to independent research, the state support for citizens during the forced quarantine downtime was not adequate. Its receiving was hampered by numerous bureaucratic obstacles that were especially difficult for vulnerable groups, including indigenous people.

The COVID-19 quarantine measures significantly influence indigenous peoples' right to free, prior, and informed consent and their ability to participate in decision making. In Russia, this is complemented by the regional economic inequality.

It is difficult to estimate the real scale of COVID-19 influence on indigenous communities in Russia as it is no disaggregated data on indigenous peoples in the Russian medical statistics. There is a possibility that remoteness and transport isolation of indigenous communities, which became an advantage during the first phase of the COVID-19 spread, could be an aggravating factor during the next virus waves.

The Russian Federation government must urgently elaborate a package of measures to strengthen indigenous communities' health care system and restore the medical facilities in remote indigenous villages. Authorities should also provide economic support for all indigenous peoples during the quarantine restrictions, including personal benefits and programs for small businesses.

To implement such actions, the Government must include indigenous peoples into the elaboration process with full respect for their right to free, prior, and informed consent. To effectively implement such measures, authorities must gather all necessary information about indigenous peoples' development in a disaggregated manner and provide adequate, timely, and accurate information to indigenous communities.

LATIN AMERICA, SOUTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND OTHER PANDEMICS AFFECTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FROM LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

By Jessica Vega Ortega, Co-chair del Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, Red de Jóvenes Indígenas de América latina y Caribe

We are aware that the world and our regions are going through a difficult time as a result of Covid-19. Therefore, it is important that the world acknowledges the historical resilience of Indigenous peoples, communities and territories, in the context of the current pandemic and many others that Indigenous Peoples had to face before. After historical efforts to uphold human rights and individual and collective rights for Indigenous Peoples, we the Indigenous youth have made great efforts to integrate our perspectives in the 2030 Agenda as a priority. But the current emergency context has exposed the lack of conviction to talk about gender equity, eradication of poverty, zero hunger or peace, to mention some of the goals of the agenda. We must urge States to make a real commitment to meet these goals.

While we have key agendas to advance rights, there is also an anti-rights movement. The Indigenous youth needs to remember that this pandemic has exposed inequalities, discrimination, racism, sector division, class divide and fundamentalisms; these issues are important for the Indigenous youth, as profound realities like persecution and criminalization for speaking up about subjects as human rights put us in danger, as it does the current pandemic. Challenges continue to appear, and now more than ever we need to accelerate the fulfilment of commitments. We are committed, but we need States to add their commitment as well to uphold the individual and collective rights for the Indigenous children and youth.

In this regard, since the pandemic started and as part of the local, territorial and regional processes of the Indigenous Youth Network of Latin America and the Caribbean (RED LAC), the first priority for the Indigenous youth was the protection of

the elders. To do so, it was essential to set the main lines of action to tackle the situation of Indigenous Peoples during the current pandemic (Indigenous from Colombia request to not mention the illness to avoid attracting it). With different realities in different countries (for example, there are barely cases in Nicaragua, and the country has so far avoided the devastating effects of the pandemic, unlike other countries as Brazil, Ecuador or Uruguay), original peoples have developed common strategies to face the current crisis. The following actions were recommended:

- ▶ **Traditional medicine**
- ▶ **Climate action**
- ▶ **Information and communication**
- ▶ **The effect of social systems**
- ▶ **Peace and security processes**
- ▶ **Social security and food security**

The pandemic is a new threat that adds to the several challenges that we are still facing. Therefore, we need to remain united in our thinking and continue to work for the recovery of our ancestral values, like reciprocity, solidarity and collectivity, if we are to face the pandemic.

From the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, our regions and the grassroots organizations that are part of different platforms like RED LAC) have sought to develop strategies to prevent, contain and manage the spread of the virus. RED LAC is part of the platform that the Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC) and Abyayala set up to gather efforts, a space where we are trying to mainstream efforts with global youth action and have a local level reach. In the current emergency context, the Indigenous youth have emphasized solidarity as one of the ancestral values as well as human rights, reminding the world that we must recover these values and highlight the importance of ancestral knowledge in this new reality. To do so, we need to give visibility to the role of Indigenous Peoples as key actors for their great historical contributions to recognise our individual and collective rights; urgently without the contributions of our peoples to the world, the new normality will continue to create problems. Zoonosis processes and the lack of respect to the harmony of Mother Earth can trigger new and unknown impacts, as it happened with the current virus. In the middle of this pandemic, Indigenous youth leaders have assumed different participatory roles to respond in a coordinated way at all levels,

driving strengthening, innovative and positive actions that target specific issues that are perceived as having a high impact in the context of the problems caused by this pandemic.

REDLAC started coordinating with around 18 countries in the region since Covid-19 was detected in February of 2020. Internal dialogues and joint actions were promoted to identify the impacts of the

“In the current emergency context, the Indigenous youth have emphasized solidarity as one of the ancestral values as well as human rights, reminding the world that we must recover these values and highlight the importance of ancestral knowledge in this new reality.”

pandemic in different territories, addressing aspects like the role and relevance of traditional medicine, the consequences of climate change impacts, the need to rely on good information and communication as a preventive and monitoring measure, and the need to develop mechanisms that address the immediate and future needs and worries, like peace processes and social and food security.

1) Traditional medicine

Traditional medicine plays an essential role to boost the immune system and to guarantee people's mental health. Several Indigenous organizations from Colombia, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Ecuador and Uruguay have systematized ancestral knowledge to help prevent the disease, with measures ranging from the creation of traditional plant and food manuals, to the search for natural disinfectants, the importance of the spiritual cleansing of people and their homes, and the spiritual protection of our elders and leaders from this pandemic.

The Indigenous youth have recommended organizing online sessions to strengthen the leadership of traditional medicine, and developing manuals that can be shared on digital platforms as a

response strategy. As a result, a specific webinar on healing and mental health was organized together with FILAC.

2) Information and communication

The search of reliable information as a strategy to fight fake news, developing materials in native languages accessible for Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous young boys and girls have raised awareness among

Indigenous peoples on how the disease works, how it can be avoided and its harmful effects for the health (in Brazil and other countries, some peoples don't believe that the disease exists). They have worked as well to discredit conspiracy theories, as instead of helping to prevent and heal, they spark social chaos. Several indigenous organizations from countries like Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador and Mexico have developed their own information manuals in indigenous languages. In

Guatemala, community radios that broadcast in their own languages are the main health awareness tool about for the communities. States have been asked to support community radio stations and other indigenous media to help raise health awareness.

3) The effects on social systems

The brutal effects of the disease are also felt in the overwhelmed health systems, the increase of domestic violence during lockdowns, suicide rates and the global economic crisis, including the increasing unemployment rate in urban areas, which directly impacts indigenous migrants or residents, as they cannot return back home out of fear to carry the disease with them. In addition, action lines should address the increase of gender violence; in Uruguay there were four femicides in the first ten days of lockdown, when on average there is one every ten days. This situation is also happening in Mexico, among other countries. These deaths should be strictly accounted as covid-related deaths.

4) Social security and food security

The fight against hunger and the imminent economic crisis in the region and the role of community meals and community values to face the crisis. The effects of the

economic recession caused by the pandemic are already evident in countries like Uruguay, Mexico, Ecuador and Guatemala. Street trading, one of the main livelihoods for indigenous people, is the most affected activity. Mass redundancies have been executed. Most of the workers that have been made redundant are young, and the economically active population is the hardest hit by the recession. Despite the risk of contagion, this situation has led many people to organize community meals and food basket collection and distribution centres so that people have something to eat at home. If people are not well nourished, they will have a weak immune system and will be helpless against the virus. Community values are the ones responding to fight the hunger that people face, while governments have done nothing to tackle the situation. States should commit themselves to develop food emergency policies and an emergency basic income to help the most vulnerable sectors, and not only the private sector, as they are currently doing.

The pandemic could last until September this year, but the economic recession will probably stay for several years. This economic recession is also affecting the countries that promote international cooperation to help indigenous peoples; therefore a decrease of this cooperation is expected in the upcoming years.

For all these reasons, some of the initiatives carried out have focused on promoting community vegetable gardens and markets, trading goods, recipes and access to water.

5) Peace and security processes

The problem of the extreme police and military control. It is something necessary during the emergency, but what happens after? We must make a call to avoid authoritarian abuse. If the extreme police and military control is not combined with effective health measures and emergency food policies, then there is instead a will to increase the political power and subject the population. Several governments are taking advantage of the pandemic situation to reinforce their authoritarian power, and this must not be allowed.

The specific situation in Colombia and the challenges of the armed conflict. On top of the pandemic and the food crisis, Colombia is still experiencing strong processes of internal violence and armed

conflict. Some of the main vulnerable groups are Indigenous Peoples, leaders and defenders. We make a special call to draw attention to the very difficult situation in Colombia, as well as other countries in a similar situation caused by a political and institutional crisis unprecedented since a very long time.

It is important to follow the monitoring and reporting of cases of police abuse during lockdowns. Some cases have been reported in Argentina and Chile.

6) Climate impacts

It is important to bear in mind that the pandemic is going to hit harder peoples from temperate areas, mountain regions and in the Southern Cone. Special care should be taken during the austral winter (June-August) in these regions. Similar to the flu, the disease is more easily transmitted in cold, temperate and season changing weathers, and less so in hot and tropical weathers. Extra care should be taken for Indigenous Peoples living in these regions during winter, as they will be more vulnerable than ever.

Mention should be made to the importance of Indigenous Peoples' actions to preserve and look after the environment and Mother Earth, preserving natural resources such as water and land in these contexts to guarantee food supply and face the climate impacts.

In RED LAC, we needed to exchange ideas and discover the strategies developed in each of the countries of the region. This situation is not affecting one single country, but the whole world, including the Indigenous Peoples who live in it.

We must remember that our free, prior and informed consent for any measure is part of our collective rights, and that this emergency situation shouldn't be used as an excuse to violate human rights or use excessive armed force.

Actions must be culturally relevant, as the Covid-19 pandemic is not only an emergency; we Indigenous Peoples know that it will affect our economies, food and individual rights. Adding to the effects of climate change, this and next year can be very challenging, but this could constitute as well an opportunity to continue to urge actions to promote the rights of Indigenous Peoples and ensure that the 2030 Agenda is effectively achieved.

OCEANIA

IMPACTS OF COVID-19 IN THE PACIFIC REGARDING THE RESPECTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES RIGHTS: REFLECTION, RESET & RESILIENCE TO REALIZE HUMAN RIGHTS IN OCEANIA

By Joshua Cooper, Executive Director, Oceania Human Rights

The Pacific remembers historically on how essential Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, specifically article 1 (right of self-determination) and article 11 (right to standard of living) and article 12 (right to health), are for all of the inhabitants of the islands nations.

The Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific reflected on the horrific health conditions that have devastated the Large Ocean Nations in the past. Oceania has learned lessons from previous encounters related to health and was determined to be decisive to save lives. Oceania understands what matters most in the world – health of the people and the planet. Therefore, Oceania recognized the reality emerging around the earth in early 2020 and made preventative measures to protect human life.

The Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific realized the host culture and place based practices still exist and can be strengthened through state policies to rediscover and seek public policies that are rooted in the indigenous values. The reset to Indigenous Peoples Rights rooted in the societal values, voices and vision offer opportunities to survive and also thrive while the world continues to confront the COVID-19 and climate crises.

The Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific comprehend that saving human life was paramount and to ensure past mistakes under colonial leadership was not repeated. The indigenous cosmology offers opportunities to know returning to normal not necessarily the best way forward for the Pacific and the world. Also, and most important, the Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific know the roots of the culture are deep in resilience to adapt to waves of challenges arriving on the shores.

On March 1, 2020, I arrived in Nadi, Fiji airport. When one is able to see the sunrise over the archipelago of natural beauty

balancing beautiful blue shades of ocean, rugged shorelines, lush green valleys and massive mountains on Viti Levu, it's one of the best ways to begin any day.

However, something was difference upon arrival, the music still played. We were greeted with band playing but it didn't play continuously for everyone departing from the plane. A health official took temperatures pointing a temperature gun straight at one's forehead. Then if number was low enough, a smile immediately appeared and the word, Bula, was cheerfully expressed. Bula never sounded better and I immediately went to walk into Nadi hearing Fiji wake up. Biting into a creamy bun was never more delicious and the Royal Poinciana were in full bloom. The final test would be entrance later in the day in Apia, Samoa, hosting the first ever UN human rights treaty body session in a region. The reward if passing the test would be arrival at the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) session featuring four Pacific nations and a Talanoa Tent of daily side events.

Arriving in Samoa an even more stringent set of health officials reviewed all paper work of tests within 48 hours prior to departure and another temperature test taken, this time in the ear.

All attending the UN CRC were willing to undergo the extended precaution. We know there was recently a measles outbreak in December 2019.. We also know the history of human rights challenges regarding health in Samoa. On November 7, 1918, the Talune arrived from Auckland to Apia. Before it was over, 22% of the Samoa people would perish from the influenza. The pandemic wreaked havoc on human life with 8,500 people perishing out of 38,302. Tonga also lost eight percent of its population. These lessons encouraged a proactive, preventative policy approach to COVID-19. This saved many lives in Oceania and kept many of the communities sealed off in many ways but society left living together in harmony with little of what the rest of the world experienced.

The peoples of the Pacific never forgot and knew must forge forward with the historical life lessons. It was preventative and proactive policies to isolate the islands and to lessen the impact of the emerging planetary pandemic. The Pacific islands States decided earlier to close the borders and cancel the chance of spread, considering the health of everyone ahead of the economy.

In one of the largest nations where many Pacific Islands inhabit. By mid-March, self-isolation for two-weeks was policy in New Zealand and before the end of the month, all foreigners were banned from entering the border. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern noted its role as a key departure route and took responsibility to protect Pacific neighbors swiftly and seriously rooted in smart science.

At the conclusion of March, when the world cancelled what we were all accustomed to and struggled to deal with COVID-19 surges, the Pacific recorded its first death. The World Health Organization provided GeneXpert testing cartridges for rapid processing and responding to results.

At the conclusion of April, New Zealand concluded five weeks of strict level four lockdowns with 75% of the country's economy returning to operation. It illustrates a path forward for Pacific Islands that concentrating on health first and foremost provides foundation to build back better but with own Pacific touch of balance and beauty.

New Zealand is one of the first nations to successfully eliminate COVID-19 from its country. All restrictions were lifted domestically but committed to a closed border. By mid June, 20,000 plus fans were attending rugby safely in packed stadiums. The vigilance of testing, tracing and being tenacious was necessary to protect the health of nations of the Pacific.

Since March, while numbers continue to rise and record number of deaths, Pacific Islands States are pleased to announce officially virus free. The challenge remains resurrecting tourism or remaining closed with economic consequences. By mid June, 15 nations in Oceania declared being virus free.

Early and decisive efforts rooted in education are essential to eliminate COVID-19. All Pacific Islands public policy must remain coherent, consistent and confidently calm explaining science behind the specific steps to save human life and take care of another during COVID-19 crisis. Learning lessons from this crisis will be valuable in future efforts to engage around the climate emergency.

We must unite and consider ourselves one tenacious and transformative team in this COVID-19 crisis. The coherent public health campaign was strengthened at the six month marker of the global shutdown among states. In August, the United

Nations partnered with Pacific Islands advocates, activists, athletes and artists to create Pacific Unite: Saving Lives Together. The unique UN endeavor was a first-of-its-kind televised and digitally streamed concert rippling across Oceania strengthening the human rights and public health movement to continue to work together across the Pacific region and partner around the planet against COVID-19 pandemic.

The virtual August concert was hosted by Auntie Tala from the Laughing Samoans featuring messages for the moment to maintain momentum in the fight against COVID delivered by high level advocates from the United Nations, heads of state of Pacific Islands States and amazing artists sharing wisdom through songs from across the vast Oceania.

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and World Health Organization Director Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus spoke along with Tuvalu prime minister and Palau president. Also Her Royal Highness Princess Salote Mafileo Pilolevu Tuita of Tonga and the Riji National Rugby Sevens Team along with Miss Pacific Islands unified the islands. The highlight was Te Vaka, Josh, Jah Boy, Skillz and Poly Flavour all entertained while educating about ways to perpetuate the positive public policies of prevention and protected the health of all Pacific islanders.

The Pacific Unite concert was first ever virtual concert comprising artists from Oceania being accessible to all audiences across the Pacific Islands and around the planet highlighting the human rights based approach signaling strong solutions are coming from civil society and the states in partnership together. The Pacific Unite concert also aimed to honor the essential workers contribution to prevent transmission and save lives so far. It was also a call to remain vigilant as many vulnerable communities still face urgent consequences in the unprecedented challenge in the Pacific.

The Pacific Unite concert helped to connect the most remote countries on earth. In September when the world gathered at the annual opening of the General Assembly to commemorate the UN 75th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations, the Pacific stood tall in its ability to act decisively

to save lives through traditional knowledge and public policy rooted in the Pacific culture. There were 12 countries that claimed to have not one single case of COVID-19. Two were dismissed as the dictators of those

“The Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific realized the host culture and place-based practices still exist and can be strengthened through state policies to rediscover and seek public policies that are rooted in the indigenous values. The reset to Indigenous Peoples Rights rooted in the societal values, voices and vision offer opportunities to survive and also thrive while the world continues to confront the COVID-19 and climate crises.”

states couldn't be trusted. The remaining 10 were all Big Ocean Nations of the Pacific -- Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Palau, Micronesia, Tuvalu, Nauru, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

The quick action to close borders even in the face of economic consequences was heroic and illuminated a human rights lens to save lives. It was necessary for nations to recognize the health facilities are under resourced and unable to cope with such a health crisis. In the Solomon Islands and Nauru there were no Intensive Care Unit beds available and Cook Islands only had two respirators.

The global community must reward the preventative approach by the Pacific for the COVID-19 pandemic and connect the multiple crises facing Oceania. During the COVID-19 when folks are told to shelter and use clean water constantly to prevent spread, Tropical Cyclone Harold illustrated the climate emergency could simultaneously strike.

If the world takes the UN Sustainable Development Goals Decade of Action seriously to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, the assistance must actualize actions and activities to provide possibilities in the Pacific. The peoples of the Pacific can do everything as illustrated with the COVID-19 crisis and preventative policies of adaptation.

However, it essential with sincerity and solidarity to decarbonize through mitigation and assist with the multiple crises facing humanity for the Pacific to Build Back Better in Beauty and Balance.

We are all in this COVID-19 and climate emergency crises together. The world must not forget Oceania as we build a global approach to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Assistance that recognizes the indigenous expertise will build a balanced human rights based approach where we can all get in our vaka and canoes to navigate the uncharted challenges facing humanity but remain committed to Malama Honua – to take care of each other and our island earth.

ASIA

COVID-19 AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ASIA

By AIPP, this article has been built by selecting some pieces upon the full report 'Asia regional report on indigenous peoples and Covid-19: Challenges to achieving the SDGs submitted to the Indigenous Peoples Major Group (IPMG)'

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically affected the world, posing a grave threat to life and to the peace of humanity. The health crisis, accompanied by the socio-economic effects caused by the confinement affecting mobility, livelihoods, income generation, and access to food, is having disproportionately adverse impacts on Indigenous Peoples, Persons with Disabilities, and women across the world. The lack of trustworthy information in Indigenous languages also invokes fear amongst these already vulnerable groups. When solidarity and collaboration is most needed, records still show intensified racial discrimination, criminalization, and human rights violations against Indigenous Peoples in various manners. Indigenous Peoples human security and political standings are deteriorating in the world, which is already in chaos. While their non-Indigenous counterparts are gradually recovering from the shock and adapting to the "New Normal", Indigenous Peoples are still bearing the heavy burden of the erosion of livelihood and wellbeing, coupled with a rolling back of their rights.

Before the world became fully immersed in a global COVID-19 pandemic emergency, attention to the once invisible Indigenous Peoples has been brought to the fore through the collaborative efforts of indigenous leaders around the world,

with the United Nations and other relevant bodies and mechanisms hoping for better livelihood and equal social status for them. In 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted to continue the missions started by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in tackling the economic, social, and environmental challenges in order to achieve global sustainable development. In the 17 goals and 196 targets the SDGs highlighted with the tenet of "leaving no one behind", many are directly or indirectly related to the rights and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples.

Five years into its implementation in 2020, however, review reports have revealed that, aside from the fact that no country is on track for achieving all the SDGs, some key SDGs are even regressing. A report released by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) states that Asia Pacific will not achieve any of the 17 SDGs by its 2030 target, based on its current trajectory. It further stated that "ASEAN has moved backwards on decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), climate action (SDG 13), and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16), and areas requiring immediate action to reverse trends, including a number of other social and environmental indicators."

It is, therefore, imperative at this stage for the States and all other development actors to include genuine partnerships with Indigenous Peoples in good faith and through collaborative partnerships to tackle the challenges Indigenous Peoples are facing under the coronavirus crisis in sustainable manners. To provide sound response mechanisms, it is important to start by providing health services, information, and systems to ensure life security of Indigenous Peoples. Equally urgent is addressing the socio-economic situation and provision of basic services and economic recovery mechanism, underlying that all interventions and actions must follow the process of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), with UN agencies and Governments respecting Indigenous Peoples' food sovereignty, land rights and acknowledging the importance of the unique biodiversity preserved in Indigenous territories. Central to the achievement of the SDGs for Indigenous Peoples is the compliance of States to their human rights obligations and commitments, undertaking transformative actions and democratization, recognition of the importance of equality and empowerment of and partnership with Indigenous Peoples and their communities. It is also vital to

strengthen the macrolevel framework for the most vulnerable and foster sustainable development; in other words, we need systems that are tailored to the needs of Indigenous Peoples.

Impacts and challenges of COVID-19 to Indigenous Peoples' wellbeing and sustainable development

Information collected by AIPP through a survey with member organisations in 14 countries shows the ramifications of COVID-19 on Indigenous Peoples. The countries with the highest numbers of confirmed cases are India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, Malaysia and Nepal (as of June 12). In fact, Indigenous Peoples, in particular Indigenous women and girls, are often disproportionately affected by epidemics and other crises. Women often face significant barriers to health care due to lack of autonomy over their own sexual and reproductive health, inadequate access to health services, insufficient financial resources as well as intensified gender-based violence, among other issues. Some confirmed cases of IPs contracting COVID-19 have been found in the Philippines, Bangladesh and Malaysia. A Tripura Indigenous youth aged thirty reportedly died of coronavirus symptoms while undergoing treatment at Khagrachari Sadar Hospital of Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh on 25 March 2019.

The numbers are increasing as migrants in huge numbers are being repatriated back to their own territories. This is being done through cramped public transportation systems and under equipped and unsanitary quarantine centers on their return. In Northeast-India where most of the states have substantial IP population, the number of cases has increased tremendously since the inter-state repatriation of the migrants, the record of 2019 recording 4,694 cases in Assam, Tripura at 1,135, Manipur at 552, Nagaland at 113, Mizoram at 121, Arunachal Pradesh at 99, Sikkim at 70, Meghalaya at 44. Testing rate and positive cases count is increasing by the day. Since access to health centers is very limited in the Indigenous areas, the safety of the Indigenous communities is at a very high risk.

The impacts of COVID-19 on Indigenous Peoples are multifaceted. Amongst them health issues are one of the most pressing, and directly related to Indigenous Peoples' wellbeing. Indigenous Peoples are "nearly three times as likely to be living in extreme poverty as their non-Indigenous

counterparts”¹⁰ which has also increased the likelihood of having underlying health conditions, making them extremely vulnerable to virus attack. As most, if not all, attention is drawn to the treatment of COVID-19, there is a shortage of providers for other health related issues, which results in the exacerbation of other ailments. In addition to poverty and underlying health conditions, many Indigenous Peoples live in remote or isolated areas, where health-care services, sanitation and protective equipment (such as masks) as well as accurate and authentic information on COVID-19 have difficulty to reaching and have limited capacity or do not exist. In many cases in the Asian region, governments have not yet provided translated information in local languages and the information is not friendly for persons with disabilities.

Lack of food security is another menace for the wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples. For communities that do not have sufficient food supplies within their lands, the outbreak and subsequent often rushed response measures such as national lockdowns can completely cut off their source of supplies. As many of the Indigenous peoples are also dependent on daily wages, losing their jobs during the pandemic can be devastating for their families. As food stocks become limited and even scarce, it is feared by many Indigenous communities that if infections were to occur in their territories, it may take a formidable shape and cause brutal destruction. Many Indigenous representatives, in calling for a reconsideration of the policies and measures taken to contain the virus, have strongly stated: “Instead of coronavirus, the hunger will kill us”.

As their wellbeing and livelihood are under threat, Indigenous Peoples are also forced to bear the ramification of public fear and anxiety against COVID-19. Racial attacks and discrimination against Indigenous people from North-East India have spiked since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, ignoring the fact that the North-Eastern states have one of the least reported cases. These cases are mainly witnessed in cities where a large number of North-Eastern Indigenous people migrate to seek education and employment opportunities. Instead of acknowledging their contribution to the socioeconomic wellbeing of the society, cases of racism against them are constantly reported, with the situation escalating due to the pandemic. People were subjected to being called “corona virus” and were taunted and accused of having

brought the virus to the community. There have been many instances where the people from the North-East were spat upon, denied entry to shops even to buy essentials, beaten up or taken into custody without explanation. There were several reports of mistreatment of migrant workers and women from this region living in a traumatized situations in urban areas. These cases are serious human rights violations against Indigenous people, suggesting long-standing racial inequality in Indian society. COVID-19 has acted as an agent to bring this chronic issue to light and further set back the goals of sustainable development in terms of creating an inclusive and equal society.

Reflecting on the SDGs and the central promise to ‘leave no one behind’, it is still true today that the risks of leaving many behind regarding life-saving measures are great and grave. Indigenous Peoples’ livelihood and wellbeing, as well as their dignity, freedom, and security as equal human beings are in dire need.

Ramifications and challenges of response measures on Indigenous Peoples’ wellbeing and sustainable development

During the state of emergency, citizens are turning their hopes to the government for disaster assistance and emergency relief. In order to contain the spread of the virus and keep its consequences to a minimum, the governments of affected countries have all established various policies and plans as they see fit. Governments have announced allocation of financial packages and material aid such as food, water and medical provisions to alleviate the socioeconomic impacts on their people.

Indeed, these measures are devised with good intentions. Some governments are aware of the extra burden on Indigenous Peoples and have established specific policies and programs with reference to Indigenous Peoples’ land, health, educational issues and have even set up specific institutions to take care of these issues. The Thai government supports workers and farmers affected by COVID-19 with a cash handout of 5,000 baht per month for three months. As infected cases decrease, it is also rolling out staged restriction lifting so as to stimulate the economy and secure jobs. India has its own Ministry of Tribal Affairs. In the Philippines, there is a National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). These institutions are

supposed to be the main body that carries out plans led by the government. It is, however, repeatedly reported from the ground that government designated emergency relief often does not reach Indigenous Peoples in a timely manner or at all.

It is therefore disheartening to discover that many of these policies, plans and their implementations have either ignored special societal groups including Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, Indigenous women and the elderly or are being delivered in a slow and delayed manner or even worse, imposing unfavorable ramifications on many aspects of their lives. Thus, the risks and challenges to the Indigenous Peoples are compounded by the failure of responsible institutions to implement benign counter-pandemic policies and plans that are tailored to the sustainable needs of Indigenous Peoples.

Aside from government relief operations, some Indigenous Peoples’ organizations have also taken steps to solicit and distribute relief packages such as rice, canned food, medicines (particularly for persons with disabilities), eggs and vegetables to urban poor and other vulnerable communities. AIPP, along with its members and networks, organized relief work in several countries and set up the Regional Response and Network on COVID-19. However, these groups have limited resources to continue to do this and they rely heavily on the solicitation of donations.

One policy that has been universally adopted by the governments is social distancing, quarantine and nationwide lockdown, albeit to various degrees. Social distancing can be difficult to practice as some Indigenous communities live in overcrowded conditions. As many Indigenous People migrate to cities to work as wage laborers, their working conditions also prevent them from abiding by the rules of social distancing. Since quarantine is regarded as an effective public health measure, social and economic activities of Indigenous communities are highly disturbed. Culturally, Indigenous People tend to gather in groups to perform rituals in times of crisis or during communal farming activities. In terms of quarantine centers, many are ill-equipped. Some are unable to provide proper distancing among people, resulting in the soaring of infected cases after being “quarantined”. Many lockdown measures are carried out in a rushed manner, which have caused many adverse impacts, particularly on already marginalized groups.

During lockdown, many governments have failed to provide the people with information on COVID-19, leading them to panic and uncertainties. As the provision of relief and sanitary goods, as well as public health care remain inaccessible in many rural and remote areas where Indigenous People reside, many of them find themselves in an unfavorable condition. This is largely due to longstanding systematic discrimination by the society and its institutions rather than a careless mistake made accidentally. Students are amongst the most affected groups during the pandemic as many schools are forced to close and the conditions of some schools are not appropriate for the containment of infectious diseases. Equal access to education has also deteriorated during the lockdown.

With this unpredictable situation, several governments have introduced or prescribed online classes across the spectrum in an unscientific manner. This policy is resulting in increasing social divide between the economically privileged and the economically backward. Groups like Indigenous Peoples are being excluded from education due to lack of digital/online education, which is called for in a democratic country that guarantees universal public education. Further, the hardest hit are persons with disabilities as their specific needs and concerns have not been taken into account.

The handling of migrant issues by the government also proves to be inefficient and insufficient in many countries. Internal and international migrant workers have been the backbone of many labor intensive industries in this region. Indigenous people take up a large percentage of migrant workers in urban areas. A sudden lockdown could render their lives uncertain and cause huge damage to their lives and the lives of their families. These issues are especially stringent in countries like Thailand, with millions of migrants from neighboring countries and, as most countries have internal migrants, the impact of COVID-19 is highly relevant to them as well.

The socioeconomic impacts listed above exemplify issues faced by the Indigenous population due to the failed measures under the COVID-19 emergency, since these measures cause health issues, value chain breakdown, unemployment, secession of remittances and migration back to community. Not limited to the above, under a global emergency, historical inequality among racial and ethnic groups has been evoked, leading to graver consequences

on the rights and security of Indigenous Peoples. Issues of land rights disputes, militarization and human rights abuses are exacerbated during the pandemic lockdown.

COVID-19 is being used to further exploit the lands and territories of Indigenous Peoples. Transnational corporations (TNCs), under the support of some state and local governments, have advanced their ravenous agenda over Indigenous lands and resources. Often these mega projects are destructive to the land and livelihood of Indigenous communities and cause subsequent violation of their rights to self-determination and ecological integrity. In the time of pandemic, as people are stuck under lockdown and quarantine and community organizing and protest actions prohibited, resource exploitation, land grabbing and rights violations are taking place. "Land rights activists and IP human rights defenders are continuously being criminalized and attacked for defending the ancestral territories and ways of life" was noted in a report prepared by Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self Determination & Liberation.

Some governments are taking advantage of COVID-19 and conducting military operations, targeting activists, red tagging activists and leaders, attacking freedom of speech and so on. With intensified militarization in some parts of Asia, particularly in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Northeast India and the Philippines, several people have been tortured and killed. "In a lockdown situation, we are not able to go to the courts or come out to protest, and governments are effectively using this situation to suit their own designs and vested interests. We are seeing that governments are rolling back protective laws and policies, weakening environmental safeguards, and diverting forestlands for large-scale development projects and agricultural purposes." Secretary General of Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) Mr. Gam A. Shimray notes, and expresses in his account great concern on the development of these events, and urges action and solidarity from developmental actors.

As many Indigenous Peoples are forced to bear the blame for the spread of the virus, antagonizing emotions are brewing

in them. This has resulted in irrational behaviors which, if left unattended, can cause deeper social issues and divergence. Psychological distress caused by the pandemic also leads to a surge in the suicide rate in some countries. Nepal has reported a total of 875 suicides during the lockdown period since March 24.

Overall, the key measures taken by the governments and responsible institutions, if any, to combat the COVID-19 pandemic

"COVID-19 is being used to further exploit the lands and territories of Indigenous Peoples. Transnational corporations (TNCs), under the support of some state and local governments, have advanced their ravenous agenda over Indigenous lands and resources. Often these mega projects are destructive to the land and livelihood of Indigenous communities and cause subsequent violation of their rights to self-determination and ecological integrity."

have proven to be insufficient and ineffective for Indigenous communities. Some of the realities are the consequences of poor planning and implementation by national governments and related institutions, whilst some are the result of discrimination and disregard for Indigenous Peoples. The cases reported as part of the enforcement of the restrictive measures by the governments have increased systematic oppression of Indigenous communities, further undermining Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination.

Efforts and initiatives of Indigenous Peoples in addressing COVID-19

Many Indigenous communities in Asia are taking their own initiatives to save themselves from the COVID-19 Pandemic. Reports have come in that several Indigenous communities have revived their age-old rituals that were used when epidemics occur. They have declared self-quarantine and village lockdowns. Facing shortage of protective equipment, they have organized among themselves workshops for making masks, hand sanitizers and soaps. Some are also campaigning in social media, translating awareness-building messages, factsheets, and leaflets on COVID-19, and distributing them across communities.

We firmly believe that Indigenous Peoples are custodians of a wealth of Indigenous knowledge, practices and culture which are deeply rooted in our connections with land, territories and natural resources and can contribute to our health and well-being. These have endured time as well as challenges of crisis. The role of elders in Indigenous communities is particularly significant as they are the backbone of the survival and thriving of these communities and hold key roles in keeping and transmitting Indigenous knowledge, practices and culture to their descendants. During the COVID-19 crisis, we are delighted to witness and hear many cases where Indigenous Peoples are taking charge to fight the virus and the discriminative policies imposed on them. As their awareness and knowledge of the virus increases, their responses have also transformed from panic-driven into well-planned responses.

Conclusion

As the world is undergoing tremendous change and nations are taking turns rolling out their 'lockdown' status, many have begun to rethink the relationship between humans and their environment. However, five years into the adoption of the SDGs by the United Nation, Indigenous Peoples are still either somewhat invisible to the dominant societal forces or remain marginalized and ill-respected. Going forward, it is vital to bring Indigenous Peoples to the fore and acknowledge their values and heterogeneities, values that should be reinforced within non-Indigenous communities. Protecting elders is a value highly held by the Indigenous communities. It is contrary to the suffering of the seniors of some nations under COVID-19. Sharing food is also an essential value among Indigenous Peoples, especially in times of need. However manic hoardings are recorded in many cities around the world, particularly at the beginning of the pandemic. These are fundamental human values that are proved to be fundamental and sustainable for humankind and need to be shared, reinforced, and adopted. It is more crucial than ever to recognize Indigenous Peoples' food sovereignty, territorial rights, and relationship to biodiversity. Positive outcomes need to be seen. But they will never be achieved by Indigenous Peoples alone. Inclusion, equality, collaboration, and empowerment among all related actors should be the principal codes of conduct when channeling resources to the Indigenous communities and creating favorable conditions for a more sustainable post-coronavirus environment for them.

PERSPECTIVE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE LIVES OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN: RESISTING AND DEFENDING OURSELVES COLLECTIVELY

By the International Indigenous Women's Forum, November 2020

The pandemic has increased the multiple inequalities and exclusions that have an impact on the lives of Indigenous Women, such as impoverishment, violence and racism, limited access to education, health and clean drinking water services, forced displacement and degradation of natural resources due to extractive industries, energy projects and climate change (CIM, 2020).

The case-fatality rate among Indigenous Peoples is three times higher than the national average, which means that one in three people dies of COVID-19 (Muñoz-Torres et al., 2020). This is the case in Quintana Roo, México, where 40% of the population identify themselves as Maya. The same occurs in other regions around the world, where a clear relation between ethnicity and death rates is observed.

The challenges that indigenous communities face to cover their basic needs make the measures to prevent the spread of the virus harder to implement, like constant hand washing and use of masks. In the Navajo Nation, in the United States, only 30% of the population has access to clean drinking water (Sala, 2020) and they have to travel approximately 30 kilometers several times a week to find a source of drinking water (Lima, 2020).

In most of the regions in the world, limited access to healthcare is an ongoing challenge. Michelle Tom, a Navajo physician, said that at the Wistow hospital, Arizona, there are not enough tests and hospital beds available to assist the indigenous population and that there is no protective equipment for the medical team. To face this situation, they have sought support through a NGO to gain access to the basic health service to protect themselves and preserve their lives (Lima, 2020). Importantly, for Indigenous Peoples health is not only linked to physical wellbeing, but also to the spiritual well-being. Spiritual well-being integrates

different elements of nature and its collective spaces that today are negatively affected. States fail to recognize this conception.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been said that older people are one of the highest risk groups. Among the Chamorro, in the Pacific, older women or Manámko are the only native speakers. The death of indigenous elders not only represents the loss of human lives, but also the loss of indigenous culture and it will increase the current ethnocide of Indigenous Peoples.

The imposed quarantines and the mobility restrictions meant that Indigenous Peoples could not maintain the connection with their spiritual spaces. It also meant that male members and young women who were studying or working away from their communities were not able to get back home with their families. This had a great impact on the increased workload of Indigenous Women, mainly in those families where there were positive cases of Covid-19, as the care responsibilities fall entirely on them.

The new care responsibilities at home will make Indigenous children and young people lag behind in their education level. In the Chamorro people, in Guam, the workload has increased for girls and young women who take care of elderly men and women, sick family members, as well as siblings or children who do not attend school. School closures and the implementation of online education programs have increased the gaps in the access of Indigenous Peoples to education and media.

One of the most pressing issues that we have worked on over the years is the multiple expressions of violence, including structural violence, in each of the impacts mentioned in this article, as this is part of the systemic culture and is one of the biggest problems affecting the lives of Indigenous women.

Since the pandemic started, the number of cases of violence has increased globally. For example, in Guyana, South America, miners have arrived to the territory over time and women leaders are responsible for monitoring the places of entry into the community, so they have been threatened. Mukkuvar Indigenous Women from Sri Lanka state that domestic violence is caused by increasing frustrations and overcrowding in communities. Amazigh women are also concerned as they consider that confinement is a physical and psychological imprisonment.

In addition, we have identified that assistance systems for reporting sexual assault and gender violence are not active in many countries, resulting in an institutional gap that only generates greater vulnerability for Indigenous Women in the context of COVID-19.

In some countries, it has been noticeable that governments have intensified the control of indigenous areas and territories during the pandemic. In Colombia, for example, murders of social and indigenous defenders in the areas of the Embera people in Chocó did not stop during the confinement period covered in FIMI's research. Even in countries such as Chile, the Army and Police are repressing and arresting traditional authori-

“We Indigenous Women have analyzed the educational impact of the pandemic making Indigenous children lag behind. To reduce this effect, communities have implemented some measures, like the distribution of books in communities with little or no access to the network or other means for online education, so that girls and young women do not miss the school year.”

ties who have made efforts to control the transit through the territories of indigenous communities (CLACSO, 2020).

Indigenous Women fighting against the pandemic

Faced with this critical situation, Indigenous Women have shown themselves to be resilient, adopting innovative and creative measures based on ancestral knowledge and practices of their peoples, through which they have sought to exercise their rights as women and members of their respective peoples, participating in the exercise of the right to self-determination, strengthening organizations for personal and community care, respecting the different visions and promoting changes for an inclusive and fair world.

An example of this is the application of traditional practices of isolation to prevent community transmission of the virus, prohibiting the entry and exit of people and closing community borders, as observed in Bangladesh and other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In some cases, women have performed duties as gatekeepers at gates and barricades.

Various peoples have celebrated healing rituals and practices led by Indigenous Women, such as the Kankanaey Igorots peoples in the Cordillera (Ubaya/Tenerw) in Philippines and Karen in Thailand (Kroh Yee). Women of the Lakota nation, in the United States, state that they have been resisting through prayers, cultural beliefs and fellowship time in the community. Spiritual counseling in various organizations has allowed them to express their problems, restore their physical-mental balance and deal with the impacts resulting from the crisis.

Several organizations state that they have “explored traditional indigenous medicine treatments in order to find natural remedies to prevent and treat coronavirus”, which, in the case of Amazigh and Gbagyi women in Morocco, and other peoples in Asia, Africa, The United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, derives from its relationship with its territory, worldview and environment. They use various parts of plants, fire, water, salt, black soap, spices, bulbs, stones, roots and bark for sterilization, disinfection and purification of food and rituals, for the well-being of body and mind, including inhalation and fumigation for cleaning houses in an ecological and safe way.

To fight food insecurity and keep the community healthy, cases have been documented in which they have shared and/or exchanged food, water, disinfectant products, made masks to donate them, or provided support so that people stuck in other cities due to quarantines can come back, among others

We Indigenous Women have analyzed the educational impact of the pandemic making Indigenous children lag behind. To reduce this effect, communities have implemented some measures, like the distribution of books in communities with little or no access to the network or other means for online education, so that girls and young women do not miss the school year.

The organization of women in the state of Edo, Nigeria, prioritized the distribution of masks to people with disabilities and relatives of the unemployed. In other cases, they have promoted the creation of small emergency funds.

Faced with a lack of culturally relevant information, Indigenous communities have prepared and disseminated messages in indigenous languages for greater understanding and acceptance of the information. Some organizations have conducted public events, home visits, and used community speakers and radios to disseminate information about COVID-19. Social networks have been very useful to organize campaigns, report on the situation of communities and raise funds for the most affected communities.

Intergenerational transmission has been a line of work, so that, in several cases, indigenous girls and young women have been trained in the manufacture of reusable face masks or in the production of sanitary pads to be distributed among women and girls.

There is no doubt that the pandemic has exposed the global vulnerability of humanity, and has forced us to reimagine and reinvent ourselves in the face of new realities. It has also given us an opportunity to show the importance of Indigenous Peoples' values and knowledge to guarantee our health, like solidarity, reciprocity, the duality of life, traditional medicine, native production of food and self-government.

More than ever, there is an urgent need for States to assume real responsibility and take concrete action for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Beijing Platform for Action. They must do so through public policies and programs with their budgetary allocations and including Indigenous Women in the processes as change agents.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

AFPAT: <http://www.afpat.net>

IITC: <https://www.iitc.org>

CSPIN: <http://www.csipn.ru/>

GIYC: <https://www.globalindigenousyouthcaucus.org>

Oceania Human Rights: <http://hawaiiinstitute4humanrights.org/>

AIPP: <https://aippnet.org>

FIMI: <http://www.aynifund-fimi.org>

GOING BEYOND THE PANDEMIC

INTRODUCTION TO THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL AND THE EU BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY FOR 2030

*By Mathias Wuidar and Amalia Rodriguez,
Docip office in Brussels*

By initiating its European Green Deal, the European Union (EU) has announced that it will make a clean slate of the past, reform its economy and develop a growth strategy based on the fight against climate change. This deep change in the EU system can be expected to have significant effects in EU initiatives to protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Green Deal is a huge European action plan whose main objective is to make Europe climate-neutral by 2050.

Presented on 11 December 2019 by the European Commission¹ and adopted by the Member States in the European Council, the Green Deal aims at proposing a whole new growth strategy for the European Union and aims at transforming it into "a climate neutral, fair society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy".

What makes the Green Deal particularly notable is the extent of the reforms and the means implemented by the EU in achieving this objective. The analysis of the budgets allocated to the Green Deal is particularly significant and have no precedent in the European Union.

In fact, the European Commission aims at investing **260 billion euros annually** to achieve carbon neutrality in 2050, plans to devote **25% of the existing budget** of the EU to the Green Deal, and to support an investment plan of **1,000 billion euros over the next decade**.

The European Commission has announced new initiatives covering a number of areas, including climate, environment, energy, transport, industry, agriculture and sustainable finance, but the Green Deal first and foremost involves a review of existing initiatives, projects and policies in the EU. Indeed, The Green Deal stresses the need for a holistic approach in which all EU actions and policies linked to the objective of climate neutrality will be reviewed and, if necessary, revised according to the increased climate ambition.

Many of these projects may concern Indigenous Peoples, whether they are directly devoted to them, or whether they address issues that may impact them as the influence of EU actions extends far beyond its borders. The EU is a major economic power, it is in particular the leading donor in the world for the protection of human rights and development aid, and it maintains diplomatic and commercial relations with almost all the States in the world, either as a regional institution or through its 27 Member States.

The Green Deal is intended to be a holistic strategy influencing every aspect of EU policies. It is likely that in future years, actions, projects and funds in favor of climate and the environment will be reviewed and rethought. We can also expect a significant number of effects in areas relating to the protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples such as development aid policies and support for human rights and democracy. It is crucial that Indigenous Peoples are consulted and participate in this process because of their predominant role in the preservation of nature, management of resources and the fight against climate change.

"The European Commission has announced new initiatives covering a number of areas, including climate, environment, energy, transport, industry, agriculture and sustainable finance, but the Green Deal first and foremost involves a review of existing initiatives, projects and policies in the EU. (...) Many of these projects may concern Indigenous Peoples, whether they are directly devoted to them, or whether they address issues that may impact them as the influence of EU actions extends far beyond its borders."

These new climate ambitions could also influence the actions of EU diplomacy in partner states and in international structures such as the United Nations.

The Green Deal presupposes that the EU also carries out extensive legislative reform. An impact assessment plan will be presented to bring to at least 50% the objective of reducing the EU's greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. To achieve this, each existing law will be reviewed on its climatic merits and new legislation will be produced on biodiversity, circular economy, agriculture, innovation, building renovation and many other areas.

Currently, there are two main initiatives proposed under the Green Deal: the European Climate Law and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Here we will only focus here on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, but you will find at the end of this article some reading suggestions to go further on the European Climate Law.

Member States have expressed their concern about the global rate of biodiversity loss and recognizes the need to step up efforts by addressing the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity and nature loss. They reiterated their call for a full integration of biodiversity objectives into other sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and forestry and a coherent implementation of EU measures in these fields by adopting Conclusions on December 19, 2019².

As a response to these Conclusions, on 25 May 2020 the European Commission transmitted to the European Council the communication "EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives"³. This communication is considered as one of the central elements of the Green Deal. It aims at protecting and restoring Europe's biodiversity and well-functioning ecosystems which is key to boost resilience of the EU economy and societies to future threats, such as climate change impacts, forest fires, food insecurity or disease outbreaks. To this end, the communication includes a number of commitments on nature protection and restoration, a new biodiversity governance framework and an EU global action on biodiversity.

Facing the urgent need to restore biodiversity and reduce the effects of the climate crisis, EU institutions are focusing on extending protected areas. In its 2030 Biodiversity Strategy, the European Commission proposes to transform at least 30% of Europe's land and sea into protected areas. Biodiversity will also receive greater attention at the international level as part of the new Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) goal of placing 30% of the Earth's

surface under conservation status by 2030, virtually double of the current area.

With the NaturAfrica initiative, for instance, the European Commission tries to protect nature in Africa while promoting the role of non-state actors in this process. Many examples show that upholding territorial rights and enabling local communities to manage their lands is the best strategy to protect biodiversity, but land grabbing and human impacts of conservation projects and abuses by eco-guards continue to make headlines.

We cannot, at this stage, precisely define the place that will be given to Indigenous Peoples in this process and the nature of the conservation model the EU will develop for 2030.

The process is only at its very beginning, but there are some encouraging elements regarding the place that Indigenous Peoples will have in this future strategy. It should be noted that the European Commission itself has been confronted with cases of violations of the rights of Indigenous Peoples linked to projects it subsidizes and has had to react. For example, in the Republic of the Congo, the European Commission has decided to suspend part of its funding to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) related to the planned creation of Messok Dja. The decision was taken owing to the recent violations of the human rights of Indigenous Peoples in the area.

A second encouraging sign of the involvement of Indigenous Peoples in the biodiversity process is that the European Commission also proposes in its communication on the "EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives" that the EU ensures a principle of equality. This principle includes notably "the respect for the rights and the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities.

"Even more, the European Commission recommends that in all of its work the EU "strengthen the links between biodiversity protection and human rights, gender, health, education, conflict sensitivity, the rights-based approach, land tenure and the role of indigenous peoples and local communities."

Finally, the European Parliament is currently working on numerous reports dealing with issues of vital importance to Indigenous Peoples such as corporate due diligence and

corporate accountability, effects of climate change on human rights and the role of environmental defenders on this matter, protection and restoration of the world's forests, and impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations in developing countries. It also advocates for greater consideration and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples.

Even if it is too early to conclude precisely on the impact that the Green Deal will have on the protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, it is notable that this policy change initiated by the Green Deal is already favoring increasing calls in the EU for a better protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and for a radical change in the design and management of conservation programs.

DISCUSSIONS HELD DURING THE 13TH SESSION OF THE EMRIP

The format of this year's session was modified due to COVID-19 pandemic. The EMRIP experts and secretariat decided to opt for regional meetings, whose topic was "*The impact of COVID-19 on the rights of indigenous peoples under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*". The online session divided in 4 regional meetings, of 2hs each.

The discussions were divided as follows:

- ▶ **Monday 30 November 2020: North America and Africa**
- ▶ **Tuesday 1st December 2020: Asia and the Pacific**
- ▶ **Wednesday 2nd December 2020: Eastern Europe, Transcaucasia, Russia and the Arctic**
- ▶ **Thursday 3rd December 2020: Central, South America and the Caribbean**

1 | [Communication from the Commission: The European Green Deal, 11 December 2019](#)

2 | [Biodiversity - Council adopts conclusions](#)

3 | [Commission communication on the "EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives" + ADD I](#)

With regards to participation and statements, the Expert Mechanism decided on the list of speakers on the basis of the following criteria: the content of the statement, the organizations level of expertise and experience on indigenous issues; the size of the organization and indigenous peoples represented; and whether the statement is a joint one and thus given preference.

In a nutshell, the topics raised by indigenous peoples' organizations are common across the different regions. Worries around the distribution of the vaccine and the hopes that States will respect their free, prior and informed consent were expressed. Mostly, indigenous peoples have shown a great resilience to the Covid-19 pandemic, by realizing themselves their own soaps and sanitizers, putting themselves in quarantine to protect the communities, and mainly used their traditional knowledge and medicine to protect them against the pandemic and heal their people.

However, they stated against the lack of access to information as health measures were not properly translated into indigenous languages, along with a recurrent problematic access to public health facilities. A big concern remains that various stakeholders took on this opportunity to

“Mostly, indigenous peoples have shown a great resilience to the Covid-19 pandemic, by realizing themselves their own soaps and sanitizers, putting themselves in quarantine to protect the communities, and mainly used their traditional knowledge and medicine to protect them against the pandemic and heal their people.”

increase land grabbing and killings over indigenous rights defenders, using the pandemic as pretext for non-vigilance from international mechanisms.

The pandemic enhanced further known challenges faced by indigenous peoples, such as trans-border exchanges among communities, increased economic inequalities in the population and no inclusion in the decision-making processes, either nationally or internationally.

STATEMENT MADE BY THE INDIGENOUS CAUCUS DURING THE 9TH SESSION OF THE FORUM ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Preventing business-related human rights abuses: The key to a sustainable future for people and planet.

Presented by Migdalia Ma. Pellicier

From the 16th to 18th of November, 2020
Indigenous Peoples' Caucus Statement

The Indigenous Peoples attending the Indigenous Caucus on Business & Human Rights from the regions of Africa; Asia; Arctic, Russian Federation, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and the Pacific, state the following:

We, Indigenous Peoples have inhabited our lands and territories from time immemorial. We have preserved and cared for our biodiversity through our cosmovision and our traditional knowledge. This relationship is essential to all peoples of the world.

As we address this year's theme, "Preventing business-related human rights abuses" we firmly believe that "the key to a sustainable future for people and planet" is intrinsically connected to respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples. In this regard, we highlight the fundamental need to use the minimum standards in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as other instruments such as ILO 169.

These instruments set forth fundamental rights such as the right to Self Determination (Art. 3), the rights to lands, territories and resources (Art. 25-28), and the rights to free prior and informed consent in all matters involving our peoples and our lands and territories.

In this time of Covid-19, Indigenous Peoples worldwide have suffered disproportionately the impacts in economic, health, social, education, and other areas. This has been exacerbated by government policies

which often promote and support human rights violations by the business community. Businesses operating on Indigenous lands and territories have failed to observe free prior and informed consent and most business models do not include benefit sharing. Indigenous owned and controlled companies have suffered financially, and do not receive the same amount of support as non-Indigenous companies.

We have a spiritual relationship with our lands, territories and natural resources. It goes beyond subsistence or tenancy. The existence of a different cosmovision and spirituality is a fundamental means for the existence of the indigenous peoples.

The lack of respect for Indigenous Peoples' collective land rights and the failure to provide indigenous communities with secure land tenure undermines their ability to protect their lands and resources from the damage of large-scale projects such as extractive industries (Article 26). This environmental violence impacts the reproductive health of women and children, our lands, water, air and natural resources and the health of our communities in general.

Indigenous Peoples are subject to acts of intimidation and repression by state and non-state actors against indigenous rights defenders. Indigenous Peoples are encouraged to take action to ensure accountability for the perpetration of reprisals.

Indigenous Peoples are the most vulnerable groups to COVID-19 who face entrenched inequalities, stigma, sexual violence, increased isolation and discrimination. Insufficient access to basic health care services, sanitation, unemployment, and limited or non-existent access to technology for online education platforms are some of the structural problems impacting communities' capabilities to cope with this pandemic. Moreover, there have been many legislative developments during COVID-19 throughout the world, including land seizures and sacred sites destruction that undermine Indigenous Peoples rights, sustainable human-environment interactions and broader enjoyment of their rights over their customary and ancestral territories. Indigenous Peoples have established response and coping mechanisms to epidemics based on their Traditional Knowledge, including medicines, healing ceremonies, rituals and other customary practices. Also by declaring community lockdowns, social distancing, and staying at home to preserve the health of the community and the land.

Extractive industries, GMOs and pesticides, structural violence, discrimination and marginalization are posing alarming threats to Indigenous Women's individual

“We, Indigenous Peoples have inhabited our lands and territories from time immemorial. We have preserved and cared for our biodiversity through our cosmivision and our traditional knowledge. This relationship is essential to all peoples of the world.”

and collective human rights, especially for those living in rural areas where the integrity of the land is essential to their survival, well-being, and reproductive health.

The Indigenous Peoples Caucus urges the Governments to take urgent action and redress in the countries where detrimental laws and regulations have been passed during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

Our recommendations are:

► We strongly recommend that all the States ratify the ILO Convention 169, implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and that States demonstrate

political support and commitment to promote the effective implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and to follow up on compliance with the guiding principles of the United Nations related to companies and their policies in indigenous territories. It is an established fact that companies routinely disrespect and violate human rights in indigenous territories, generating violence and sometimes sponsoring the creation of armed groups outside the law. Usually with impunity.

► To create a UN monitoring and reporting mechanism on Business and Human Rights for Indigenous Peoples, where our grievances could be reported, corrected and redressed. For example, cases of violations of the Indigenous Peoples rights by mining companies have become systematic and it is necessary to introduce such specific international oversight in those countries where mining is carried out, namely in the territories of traditional economic activity and use by Indigenous Peoples. In case of detection of violations of Indigenous Peoples rights, the mechanism can

recommend a suspension of activities in the affected areas.

► Call States and Multilateral organizations -including international financial institutions- to work with Indigenous Peoples to develop standards and regulations to achieve SDGs, adhering to Business & Human Rights Guidelines, core UN instruments and Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

► To stop using COVID-19 to further shrink civic and democratic spaces, to use as cover to deploy military operations for the criminalization and persecution of human rights defenders and the illegal appropriation of Indigenous Peoples lands and territories.

► To respect our right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and to include our full and effective participation to constructively engage in processes that may affect our identities, lives, livelihoods and cultures, especially those related to our lands, as per the UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Specially ensuring the inclusion of Indigenous Women and Youth during FPIC processes.

**Thank you Mr. Chairperson/
Madame Chair.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To go further regarding European Climate Law:

[Draft partial general approach 12083/20](#)

[European Council conclusions, 15-16 October 2020](#) (press release, 16 October 2020)

[European Council conclusions, 12 December 2019](#) (press release, 12 December 2019)

[Strategic agenda adopted by the European Council on 20 June 2019](#)

[Amended proposal for a European climate law by the European Commission](#)

[Original proposal for a European climate law by the European Commission](#)

[Commission communication on 'Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition](#)

[Climate change: What the EU is doing](#) (background information)

To go further regarding EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030:

[Commission communication on the "EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives + ADD 1](#)

[UN Biodiversity Summit: Council sends a united signal to step up global ambition for biodiversity](#) (press release, 21 September 2020)

[Biodiversity - Council adopts conclusions](#) (press release, 19 December 2019)

[Strategic agenda adopted by the European Council on 20 June 2019](#)

[Biodiversity: how the EU protects nature](#) (background information)

DOCIP'S ACTIVITIES

TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT

The aim of Docip Technical Secretariats is to bring technical assistance to Indigenous delegates during various UN conferences and international meetings on issues affecting them. During these meetings, Docip Technical Secretariat assists the Indigenous delegates by (1) creating a back office where they can seek assistance and have access to computers, printers and photocopiers; (2) producing and distributing detailed informative documents on the international mechanisms as a support of orientation; (3) providing interpretation services in its four working languages – English, Spanish, French and Russian – for side-events, bilateral and informal meetings; (4) providing translation services for statements or other documents; (5) assisting with the organization of preparatory Indigenous Caucus meetings.

From January to March 2020 Docip has assisted several Indigenous delegates and Indigenous organizations in the framework of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council held in Geneva.

Following the Covid-19 pandemic that erupted earlier this year, the Technical Secretariat had to adapt its services to support remotely Indigenous Peoples during online meetings, consultations, webinars and conferences by providing online meeting platforms and online interpretation and translation services. The new technology adopted by Docip Technical Secretariat has permitted the remote assistance to Indigenous Peoples in the framework of the following UN mechanisms:

- The WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore.
- The 13th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)
- The 45th session of the Human Rights Council
- The 9th session of the Forum on Business and Human rights

Since the beginning of the year, Docip Technical Secretariat has provided simultaneous interpretation services during 3 onsite side-events plus 64 online webinars and online meetings organized by/for Indigenous Peoples (which also included 10 online Indigenous Caucus meetings and 1 online consultation meeting). These meetings have required a total of 500 hours of interpretation work in Russian, French, Spanish, English and Portuguese.

Docip technical secretariat has been delighted to support Indigenous initiatives through these new online services and is looking forward to continuing to help maintain the communication between Indigenous Peoples from different regions and between IPs and UN bodies until the global situation allows them to meet in person again.

Contact: *Johanna Massa* – johanna.massa@docip.org

CAPACITY-BUILDING PROJECTS

Docip is offering different capacity-building projects:

1 – the *Update*:

It exists in electronic and printed version in our four working languages. It contains the latest discussions held during the year regarding indigenous peoples' rights, either during the different UN mechanisms on indigenous peoples' rights, or by making reference to other processes that concern indigenous peoples. The Update provides new and updated information on what is happening at the global level, such as the forthcoming agenda for the following year, Regional News on processes regarding indigenous peoples in the various indigenous regions – two per issue are dealt with – and a new section on the activities provided by Docip.

2 – Docip Training-of-Trainers (ToT) session:

Once a year, Docip organizes a Training of Trainers on indigenous peoples' rights at the international level; and in collaboration with our partner HURIDOCs, for a workshop on how to document human rights violations. At the end of the training, the trainees participate in an international conference.

3 – Trainings in the field:

As a direct outcome of the ToT, Docip conducts a close follow-up of the trainings that the trainee organized once they returned home, in order to achieve more advancement of indigenous peoples' rights in their region.

4 – Coordination of volunteers:

Volunteers are a crucial to Docip's work during an international conference. The services that require volunteers are technical secretariat, publications and documentation.

As a follow-up of the two previous years of trainings, fellows from Solomon Islands are submitting a report for the next UPR review of their country. Also, in Papua New Guinea, national laws have been changed to grant recognition to an indigenous territory close to the main city Port Moresby. Furthermore, a collaboration between humanitarian actors and previous fellows in Colombia is being implemented to help them face their human rights violations in country. The next step for Docip's training program is to secure funds to keep granting such results for next generation of fellows. Also, we happily go into the field to provide trainings when we receive invitations. Do not hesitate to contact us for further information!

Contact: *Claire Moretto* – claire.moretto@docip.org

ORAL HISTORY AND MEMORY PROJECT

In 2013 and 2015, two four-day Symposiums organized by Docip brought together some of the First Indigenous delegates who came before the UN in 1977/1981 and Indigenous youth from the Americas, Asia, Africa, the Arctic and the Pacific and laid the groundwork for a review of 36 years of the promotion of Indigenous Peoples' rights through intergenerational and interactive dialogue. The Elders hoped to pass on a message to indigenous youth, who represent the next generation of indigenous rights defenders, so they can continue the tradition of oral transmission, to relate not only the experience of those who first came to the UN, but also the struggles of their local communities.

A more extensive research project was launched on the transmission of oral memory among Indigenous Peoples by developing additional training workshops at the local/community level. So far, three regional workshops have been organized, each assembling 10-12 Indigenous Youth from different communities and 5-6 Elders during 5 days. The first workshop was held in South Dakota (USA) in July 2015. The second was held in Buenos Aires (Argentina) in September 2016 and the third was held in Narok (Kenya) in December 2017.

Since 2018, Docip followed up with the Youth in order to select, edit, archive and document all the video material recorded by them during the Symposiums and the workshops and also (later/after) in their communities. An Internet platform is about to be launched aimed at sharing and narrating all this curated digital heritage in culturally relevant and ethically-minded ways. A new workshop was planned in Asia this year but due to the Corona virus it will be postponed to next year.

Contact: *Fabrice Perrin* – fabrice.perrin@docip.org

DOCUMENTATION

The main duty of Docip's Documentation Centre is to make its documents available through its platform, Greenstone. The central core of the database is its extensive collection of statements made by Indigenous Representatives, as well as NGOs, States and International Organizations at the UN or during other meetings. However, this year has been peculiar as the COVID 19 pandemic occurred, which has greatly impacted the UN conferences' agenda. Indeed, numerous conferences, such as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and The WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore have been postponed to 2021. This has affected the number of documents collected, but Docip still managed to add to its database 101 statements.

This uncommon period has also given me time to explore and update our database. Important sessions such as the folder regarding the UPR sessions is now up-to-date. In addition, on another level, documentary research has been an important activity, when requested by Indigenous Representatives or Docip's partners. The Documentation Centre also contains 2,036 monographs in hard-copy and can be consulted here in Geneva. Hopefully, next year, visitors, especially Indigenous Representatives, will be able to take a tour of it while attending conferences in the Geneva UN Headquarters.

Finally, regarding the Summary Notes, which are a report on the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII and one on the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) issued in our four working languages, only one of them has been published. Indeed, because the Permanent Forum has been postponed to 2021, its Summary Notes have not been written. However the one regarding the EMRIP will be issued in the beginning of 2021; its form will be slightly different from the previous years, as the session happened in a reduced and virtual form.

Contact: Priscilla Saillen – priscilla.saillen@docip.org

DOCIP'S INFORMATION SERVICE

Docip's timely information service aims to inform Indigenous Peoples around the world about important international and regional meetings and events, and to support their active participation in those events. Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, most international meetings have been cancelled or postponed, many others moved online. Since May 2020 Docip's information service published information on over 300 webinars and other online events. For the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on August 9, 2020 we produced a webpage with information on 30 events. During the first months of the pandemic, we compiled information from various UN sites on their pandemic response. Special efforts were made to keep track of shifting deadlines and new online procedures for the submission of statements and reports.

To achieve our goal, we maintain an extensive network of sources from Indigenous Peoples' organizations, NGOs, UN agencies, and the academic community. We constantly monitor our own email and social media accounts, as well as our network's mailing lists for important news, and we disseminate relevant information in our four working languages via our information channels:

Mailing lists: <http://bit.ly/docip-subscription>

Website Newsfeed: <http://bit.ly/docip-news>

On-line agenda:

<http://bit.ly/docip-agenda-en>

Social media channels:

• **Facebook:** <http://bit.ly/docip-fb>

• **Twitter:** <http://bit.ly/docip-tw>

• **LinkedIn:** <http://bit.ly/docip-li>

Every Friday, we publish a weekly newsletter to our mailing lists and on our website announcing meetings and events, deadlines and other selected information for Indigenous Peoples. To maintain and improve our information service, we depend on you: please include our address docip@docip.org in your distribution lists, and send us feedback on your information needs.

Contact: Pascal Angst – pascal.angst@docip.org

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>CBD</u>	<i>Convention on Biological Diversity</i>
<u>CRC</u>	<i>Committee on the Rights of the Child</i>
<u>CEDAW</u>	<i>Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women</i>
<u>CERD</u>	<i>Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination</i>
<u>EMRIP</u>	<i>Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</i>
<u>EU</u>	<i>European Union</i>
<u>FBHR</u>	<i>Forum Business and Human Rights</i>
<u>FPIC</u>	<i>Free, Prior and Informed Consent</i>
<u>HRC</u>	<i>Human Rights Council</i>
<u>NGO</u>	<i>Non-Governmental Organization</i>
<u>UN</u>	<i>United Nations</i>
<u>UNDRIP</u>	<i>United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</i>
<u>UNESCO</u>	<i>United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture</i>
<u>UNGA</u>	<i>United Nations General Assembly</i>
<u>UNPFII</u>	<i>United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues</i>
<u>UPR</u>	<i>Universal Periodic Review</i>
<u>WIPO</u>	<i>World Intellectual Property Organization</i>

AGENDA FOR 2021

CONFERENCES

► 48th session of the Human Rights Council (September session)

Date: 13 September - 01 October 2021

(second week with the annual half-day discussion on the rights of indigenous peoples, *tentative*).

TREATY BODIES

► UPR sessions

► 37th session

Dates: 18 - 29 January 2021

Review of Federated States of Micronesia, Lebanon, Mauritania, Nauru, Rwanda, Nepal, Saint Lucia, Oman, Austria, Myanmar, Australia, Georgia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Sao Tome and Principe.

► 38th session

Dates: 03 - 14 May 2021

Review of Namibia, Mozambique, Paraguay, Denmark, Somalia, Niger, Estonia, Belgium, Palau, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Latvia, Sierra Leone, Singapore.

► 39th session

Dates: 01 - 12 November 2021

Review of Suriname, Greece, Samoa, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sudan, Hungary, Papua New Guinea, Tajikistan, the United Republic of Tanzania, Antigua and Barbuda, Eswatini, Trinidad and Tobago, Thailand, Ireland.

► Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

► 86th session

Dates: 18 January - 05 February 2021

States Parties reports: Afghanistan, Cambodia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Eswatini, Poland, Tunisia.

▶ **87th session**

Dates: 17 May - 04 June 2021

States Parties reports: Afghanistan, Croatia, Cuba, Djibouti, Greece, Kiribati, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Somalia.

OPAC: Afghanistan.

▶ **88th session**

Dates: 13 September- 01 October 2021

States Parties reports: Canada, Iceland, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Philippines, Ukraine, Vietnam.

▶ **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**▶ **78th session**

Dates: 08 - 26 February 2021

States Parties reports: Bahrain, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nicaragua, South Sudan, Yemen, Russian Federation, Spain.

▶ **80th session**

Dates: 01 - 05 March 2021

States Parties reports: China, China (Hong Kong), China (Macao), United Arab Emirates, Hungary, Mauritania, Namibia, Uganda.

List of items to be addressed before submitting reports for adoption: Bhutan, Chile, Italy.

▶ **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR)**▶ **131st session**

Dates: 01 - 26 March 2021

Lists of Issues: Burundi.

Lists of issues prior to reporting: Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Fiji, Grenada, Iceland, Malawi, Nepal, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, United Republic of Tanzania.

▶ **132th session**

Dates: 28 June - 23 July 2021

Lists of issues prior to reporting: Albania, Canada, Ecuador, France, Mozambique, Timor-Leste, Turkey.

▶ **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)**▶ **69th session (virtual)**

Dates: 15 February - 05 March 2021

States Parties reports: Finland, Latvia.

▶ **68th session (pre-sessional working group)**

Dates: 08 - 12 March 2021

States Parties reports: Brazil, Cambodia, China, China (Hong Kong), China (Macau), Lithuania, Panama, Portugal.

In the Docip website
(www.docip.org)

you can find an exhaustive agenda
of the conferences throughout the year,
updated every week.

A weekly mail is sent to the people
who subscribed on the welcome page
of our website to receive the news
related to the agenda.

SUMMARY OF THIS EDITION

As any other project, Docip Update has been slightly modified this year to adopt to the current circumstances.

Indigenous peoples' voices must be heard, no matter if it is online or offline, through an umbrella organization or through the small NGO that gathers leaders from the communities. In these times of pandemic which had put the entire world to reflect about the societies, Indigenous Peoples have shown an incredible resilience and taught the rest of us many more things about the incredible richness of their traditions and cultures. And, of course, ties to their homelands.

As many saw in 2020 this opportunity for a change, it has also been the opportunity for many States and companies to increase the criminalization against human rights defenders, to get more impunity for land grabbing and more generally to discriminate even more – if possible – Indigenous Peoples. And it has been the opportunity for Indigenous Peoples once more to rise up with the means they have, and those definitely are great.

This issue presents in its Focus section the situation induced by the pandemic in the several socio-economic regions, giving the voice to Indigenous organizations. In the Ongoing Processes section, you will find a first article on the EU biodiversity strategy, a second article that summarizes the discussions that were held in the realm of the 13th session of the EMRIP and finally the written statement submitted by the Indigenous Caucus during the 9th session on the FBHR. Finally, the Docip team is being held accountable to our network by presenting the services provided to indigenous peoples this year.

I sincerely hope that you will enjoy reading this edition, and stay at your entire disposal for any further comment.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Moretto

Capacity-Building Projects Coordinator

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Disclaimer:

Please be advised that the opinions and positions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of Docip, which is an organization committed to the principle of neutrality and impartiality.

This issue of the *Update* was redacted and compiled by Claire Moretto in DECEMBER 2020. Therefore, some of the news and information reported in the issue may have changed or been updated during the time it was being edited and translated before its publication in DECEMBER 2020. The reproduction and dissemination of information contained in the *Update* is welcome, provided sources are cited.

This issue, originally prepared and edited in English, is also available in Spanish, French and Russian. Online versions in all languages may be found on Docip's website. Additionally, Docip sends printed copies to indigenous organizations and to academic institutions, and copies are made available at the Docip documentation centre in Geneva and at the UN conferences that Docip attends.

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