

SUMMARY OF THE 13TH SESSION/REGIONAL MEETINGS OF THE EXPERT MECHANISM ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

30 November – 4 December 2020

The summary notes are reports of the most important UN meetings on indigenous rights and are issued twice a year. They are only available in an electronic version and sent by email.



Preliminary notice to this Summary:

This summary is based on the notes taken during the conference, the statements collected by Docip services and the rolling speakers' list of the conference. However, those notes reflect only the statements that have been delivered. The sessions that dealt with the agenda items of the [programme of work](#) of the thirteenth session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) are detailed herein.

This document uses abbreviations, the index of which is available in Annex I.

1. Executive Summary

This thirteenth session of the EMRIP was the fourth such session to take place since the adoption of Human Rights Council (HRC) [resolution 33/25](#), which revised EMRIP's mandate. This new mandate provides EMRIP Members with new capacities, including the ability to engage with the private sector, to advise States on the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) upon request, to engage with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the treaty bodies process, and to establish an enhanced cooperation with the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), to name a few. The EMRIP is now composed of seven Expert Members, who represent the seven socio-cultural regions, as decided by Indigenous Peoples: Mr. Belkacem Lounes from Algeria for Africa (2021), Mr. Binota Moy Dhamai from Bangladesh for Asia (2023), Ms. Erika Yamada from Brazil for Latin America and the Caribbean (2022), Ms. Laila Vars from Norway for the Arctic (2023), Mr. Rodion Sulyandziga from the Russian Federation for Russia, Eastern Europe and Transcaucasia (2022), Ms. Kristen Carpenter from the USA for North America (2021) and Ms. Megan Davis from Australia for the Pacific (2022).

The format of this year's session was modified due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The EMRIP Expert Members 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 was divided into 4 regional meetings, of 2 hours each.

The discussions were divided as follows:

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

Regarding participation and statements, the Expert Mechanism selected the list of speakers on the basis of the following criteria: content of the statement, the level of expertise and experience of the organisation on indigenous issues, and the size of the organisation and the indigenous peoples represented; also, preference was given to joint statements.

A general review of the statements makes it clear that the topics raised by indigenous peoples' organisations are shared across the different regions. They expressed their worries about the distribution of the vaccine and their hopes that States will respect their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). In a majority of cases, indigenous peoples have shown great resilience to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, they have made their own soap and hand sanitizer, they have self-quarantined in order to protect their communities, and they have mainly used their traditional knowledge and medicine to boost their immune system and heal patients. However, they have pointed out that the information provided regarding sanitary measures has not been comprehensible by their communities, as it has not been translated into indigenous languages. In relation to this, they stressed the lack of access to health services. In addition, indigenous peoples have shared a major concern, which is that various stakeholders have used the pandemic as an opportunity to increase land grabbing and killings of indigenous rights defenders. By doing so, they have decided not to respect international mechanisms. Finally, the pandemic has enhanced further challenges for them, such as inhibited trans-border exchanges between communities, increased economic inequalities as compared with the rest of the population and lack of inclusion in decision-making processes, either nationally or internationally.

2. Details

Monday, 30 November

- **Regional Meeting: Africa and North America**

Ms. Kristen Carpenter, Member of the EMRIP, welcomed the participants to the virtual session and expressed her wish for the 2021 session to be held in person. She also added that the EMRIP has received more than 90 contributions from indigenous delegates, which will be posted on their website. **Mr. Lounes Belkacem, Member of the EMRIP**, sent his greetings to all the participants.

Canada mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities among indigenous communities, but the Government has financially assisted indigenous peoples during this time. **Ms. Andrea Carmen, International Indian Treaty Council**, stressed the difficulty of accessing appropriate health services. She also explained that indigenous peoples have set up checkpoints at the entrance of reservations; however, they have been asked by the Government to remove them. **Mr. Oren Lyons, Indigenous World Association**, expressed his wish that governments respect the FPIC of indigenous peoples, when the vaccine becomes available, as they want to regulate its distribution themselves. **Ms. Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs**, explained that although her community is working with state services in order to fight COVID-19, challenges remain, such as lack of access to medical aid for indigenous peoples living in remote areas; lack of appropriate financial support and the rise of mental illnesses and domestic violence. A member of the **File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council (FHQTC)**, expressed the feeling that indigenous peoples are not sufficiently being supported by the Government during this pandemic, as they do not have access to health services and adequate financial support. The issue of increasing domestic violence and the

many attempted abductions of women and children was also addressed. **Mr. Drew Lafond, Canada Indigenous Bar Association**, explained that indigenous lawyers have struggled during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that indigenous peoples' rights to land and to adequate health services are respected. **Dr. Evan Adams, Actor/Physician & Deputy Chief Medical Officer – Indigenous Services Canada**, said that the number of patients affected by COVID-19 was extremely high among indigenous communities; nevertheless, many of them recovered through the use of their traditional medicine. **Ms. Jennifer Rocchio, PineCreek First Nation Manitoba, Canada**, spoke of the lack of access to clean water and proper medical aid for members of her indigenous community and added that the lock-down had had a terrible effect on them as suicide cases increased.

Chief Willem Aib, HAI/OM Bushmen Community Development Organisation (HBCDO), shared concerns about the Namibian Government's lack of assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic. He added the fact that the Government took control of indigenous lands during this period, which did not allow them to continue their work as stewards of the environment. **Mr. Khalid Zerrari, Congrès Mondial Amazigh**, denounced the fact that violations against Amazigh people have increased during the pandemic, human rights defenders having for example been criminalized. He furthermore explained how they had been dispossessed of their lands during COVID-19. **Mr. Justin Assomoyi, Directeur General for the promotion of Indigenous Peoples, Republic of Congo**, spoke about the medical aid and financial support provided by the government to the indigenous communities across the country. He added that in order to improve their living conditions, the government has to implement the new National Action Plan. **Mr. Handaine Mohamed, Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC)**, explained how IPACC has put in place a program to raise awareness among indigenous communities all around the continent about the negative effects of COVID-19. He then called on governments to provide indigenous peoples with access to good health services and to share the future vaccine equitably among indigenous communities. **Mr. Amadou Ahidjo, Santa Mbororo Youth Association of Cameroon (SAMUSA-SANTA)**, pointed out the lack of access to basic items such as soap and sanitizer to better enable indigenous communities to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. He also explained the difficulty for children to continue studying remotely as a result of their shortage of computer equipment.

Remarks were made and questions were raised by the participants. The representative of **Canada** explained that the Government has been redoubling its effort to protect indigenous women and children, as well as LGBTQI+ people, during the pandemic. **Mr. Handaine Mohamed, IPACC**, asked if it would be possible to translate official documents regarding the pandemic into as many indigenous languages as possible. **Mr. Amadou Ahidjo, Santa Mbororo Youth Association of Cameroon (SAMUSA-SANTA)**, questioned whether it would be possible in Cameroon to have adequate information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic since there is a lack of computer equipment. **A member of the Amazigh community in Algeria** asked if the Algerian Government had taken measures against the violations of the human rights of indigenous peoples. **A member of the Amazigh community in Morocco** asked if the Government had implemented mechanisms in order to help the indigenous community during the pandemic.

Ms. Kristen Carpenter, Member of the EMRIP, made concluding remarks. She reminded Member States to use the UNDRIP as a guiding tool during the pandemic. She also highlighted the need for some indigenous communities to attract more attention from their governments. Finally, she called for the respect of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge and traditional medicine. **Mr. Lounes Belkacem, Member of the EMRIP**, concluded by asking Member States to have a more open communication with indigenous communities during this period. Furthermore, he encouraged indigenous peoples to share their concerns and situation with the EMRIP, without fear of repercussions from their respective governments. Lastly, he high-

lighted the common difficulties faced by indigenous peoples such as lack of access to health services, appropriation of their lands and rising poverty.

Tuesday, 1 December

- **Regional Meeting: Pacific and Asia**

Ms. Megan Davis, Member of the EMRIP, welcomed all the participants to the regional meeting. She also underlined the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the inequalities and discrimination against indigenous peoples. **Mr. Binota Moy Dhamai, Member of the EMRIP**, thanked the participants for their presence.

New Zealand explained how its Government worked with Māori leaders during the pandemic, for example, by setting up checkpoints. The representative also said that informative materials were translated into Māori languages to ensure that information about the pandemic is understood by as many people as possible. **Ms. Sasha Purcell, United Nations Association of Australia – Queensland Division**, spoke about the fact that indigenous traditional practices have been revived during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, she mentioned that Torres Strait Islanders, as stewards of the environment, have used their time to explore and assess the effects of climate change in Australia. **Ms. Tricia Keelan, New Zealand Human Rights Commission**, highlighted the good practices observed during the pandemic, such as the creation of checkpoints and the exercise of their right to self-determination. However, she also spoke about remaining challenges such as the need for the government to include Māori people in the decision-making process and the importance of continuing to implement the National Action Plan. **Australia** reaffirmed its support for UNDRIP. The representative explained as well that the Government has worked with Aboriginal organisations in order to respond to the pandemic, through adequate financial assistance and the production of informative documents in Aboriginal languages. **Ms. Margaret Mutu, Independent Iwi Monitoring Mechanism (AIMM)**, described how Māori people have suffered disproportionately from pandemics in the past; therefore, they acted quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic. She added that they asked the Government in a second phase to fund their emergency programs, and that it would have been impossible for the Government to reach Māori communities without the help and support of local leaders. By reacting before being contacted by the Government, they used, according to her, their right to self-determination. Finally, she pointed out that the pandemic has increased levels of mental illness in Māori communities. **Ms. Cathy Eatock, Indigenous Peoples Organisation**, spoke about the difficulties faced by Aboriginal people during the pandemic, such as lack of electricity in more than 30% of homes, lack of proper computer equipment to enable children to study remotely and the rise of mental illness. **Ms. Anne Dennis, New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council**, said that the pandemic has shown the resilience of Aboriginal people. She also described how indigenous elders and persons with disabilities have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as many suffer from chronic illnesses. NSWALC has also supported indigenous entrepreneurs with programs targeted for them, in order to help compensate for financial losses.

Mr. Gam A. Shimray, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, said that human rights defenders have been disproportionately killed even during the pandemic. In addition, he also explained that governments have used this time to take more ownership of indigenous lands. **Ms. Dato' Dr. Madelin Berma - Malaysia – Human Rights Commission**, stressed that indigenous communities, especially in the agriculture sector, have lost their income. She also mentioned the difficulty for indigenous children to follow their courses remotely due to a lack of computer equipment. **Mr. Yasukatsu Matsushima, Nirai Kanai nu Kai**, explained that Okinawa has

the highest number of people affected by COVID-19. He also referred to an ongoing process regarding the repatriation of the human remains of the indigenous Ryūkyūans, currently kept in museums, as they want to bury them in a traditional way. **Mr. Joshua Shuaboih, Asia Indigenous Peoples' Caucus, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact and Indigenous Peoples with Disabilities Network**, asked governments not to use the pandemic to exacerbate land grabbing and militarization in the territories of indigenous peoples. **Ms. Aisah Czarriane Mariano, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), Asia Indigenous Peoples Caucus, Asia Indigenous Youth Platform (AIYP) and Asia Young Indigenous Peoples Network (AYIPN), Philippines**, urged governments to stop the militarization of indigenous peoples' territories, particularly in the Philippines, Bangladesh, Northern India and Nepal. **The Philippines** said that its Government has helped indigenous communities to fight the pandemic, for example, by putting in place a quarantine. The representative also accused the New People's Army of killing indigenous leaders. **Ms. Lin Lin Su, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, Asia Indigenous Peoples Caucus and Network of Indigenous Women in Asia**, mentioned to the participants that indigenous women, youth and people with disabilities have faced further discrimination during the pandemic. She gave the example of the rise of teenage pregnancies as a result of the rise of sexual violence against women.

Questions were raised by the participants. Ms. Sasha Purcell was asked if the use of indigenous practices and knowledge was an expression of their right to self-determination. Ms. Purcell replied that it was. Mr. Gam A. Shimray commented on isolated indigenous communities. He explained that in Asia it is a bit more complex, as some indigenous peoples are in forced isolation. This is due to the constant confrontation and aggression from external stakeholders, even though this isolation still gives them the opportunity to mark their autonomy. However, the pandemic has made it difficult for them to enforce their land rights and their right to self-determination. **Ms. Laila Vars, Chair of the EMRIP**, asked about the progress of the implementation of the New Zealand National Action Plan. Ms. Margaret Mutu answered the question and explained that the National Action Plan has been carried out. She said that a report has been proposed to the Government, but that it has not yet been released. **Ms. Cathy Eatock, Indigenous Peoples Organisation**, inquired about the status of the implementation of the Australian National Action Plan. The representative of Australia responded that the Government will reach out to Ms. Eatock after the meeting to answer her question. **Ms. Sasha Purcell, United Nations Association of Australia – Queensland Division**, asked the Australian Government about what was being done regarding the issue of climate change and supporting the communities of the Torres Strait Islands. The representative of Australia responded that the Government will reach out to Ms. Purcell after the meeting to answer her question.

Ms. Megan Davis, Member of the EMRIP, shared concluding remarks with the participants. She said that the lack of access to appropriate health care services has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. She also stressed that, nonetheless, the pandemic will give the EMRIP Expert Members a good overview on the degree to which the UNDRIP is being respected and implemented by Member States. **Mr. Binota Moy Dhamai, Member of the EMRIP**, highlighted the lack of political consideration of the views of indigenous peoples in governments' decisions. He concluded by mentioning that, when the pandemic started, indigenous communities began to use their traditional knowledge and self-quarantined, thus applying their right to self-determination.

Wednesday, 2 December

- **Regional Meeting: The Arctic; Central and Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia**

Mr. Rodion Sulyandziga, Member of the EMRIP, greeted the participants and reiterated his desire for indigenous peoples to be a part of the decision-making process in respect of their FPIC. **Ms. Laila Vars, Chair of the EMRIP**, welcomed the participants and explained the proceedings of the session.

Ukraine spoke about the situation of the Crimean Tatars, who are still suffering from the occupation of their lands by the Russian Federation. The representative added that human rights violations have been increasing during the pandemic. **Mr. Genadiy Shukin, Aborigin-Forum, The Russian Federation**, denounced the lack of access to appropriate health services for indigenous peoples living in remote areas and the lack of financial support. He added that the forced quarantine had profoundly affected their right to FPIC and their right to self-determination. He further added that the medical statistics were not available to the public, thus the Aborigin-Forum expressed doubts about its veracity. **Ms. Marina Odzial, Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North in the Ulch District**, explained how her association managed to prevent the spread of the virus by providing food supplies and school materials to the indigenous peoples in the Ulch District. **Mr. Dmitry Berezhkov, Arctic Council Russia**, told the participants that there are very few members of indigenous peoples in Northern Russia, and that they are among the poorest in the country. He also said that during COVID-19 all medical services were closed down. **The Russian Federation** expressed their regret regarding the statement of Ukraine, as it was not, according to the representative, related to the topic of the session. It was also explained that the Government made sure to transport food supplies and fuel via medical helicopters for the indigenous peoples who live in remote areas. Finally, the representative added that, during the pandemic, indigenous peoples were not authorised to carry on some of their activities, such as fishing and hunting, for which they received financial compensation. **Mr. Eduard Yaungad, Association of Indigenous Peoples Yamal – Potomkam**, explained that, when COVID-19 arrived in the region of Yamal-Potomkam, the Nenets people had already left for the Tundra as they are pastoralists who practice transhumance. Therefore, the association, working jointly with local authorities, organised transports of food supplies, clothing, etc. to them via specialized vehicles and helicopters. He added that financial help was also provided.

Mr. Túomas Aslak Juuso, Sámi Parliament of Finland, spoke about the challenges faced by the indigenous peoples during the 45th session of the Human Rights Council. He said that, due to its virtual format, indigenous delegates were not able to properly participate in the negotiations. They therefore request that the Council include them in the decision-making process. **Mr. Hjalmar Dahl, Inuit Circumpolar Council**, explained that inequalities among indigenous peoples and the other inhabitants of the region have increased during COVID-19, especially because of poor infrastructures. Furthermore, he said that the health conditions have become degraded, which has resulted in the rise of suicide among the Inuit People. He therefore asked the Government to invest in the community in order to improve their living conditions. **Ms. Aili Keskitalo, Sámi Parliament of Norway**, described the difficulties for Sámi people during COVID-19, especially the fact that the border closure between Norway, Finland and Sweden has complicated the cross-border exchange between the Sámi communities. She mentioned too the lack of informative documents in the Sámi language. She requested that governments respect their right to self-determination and their right to be included in the decision-making. **The European Union** asked the other Member States to listen to the indigenous peoples, as they have been deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. **Mr. Per-Olof Nutti, Sámi Parliament of Sweden**, told the participants that the economic situation of the Sámi People has greatly declined during the pandemic. Numerous family businesses have gone bankrupt, as they were not able to carry on their activities as a result of the border closure. It has also affected their way of taking decisions, since it has been impossible for them to gather as they usually do. However, despite the situation, the Sámi People have managed to show how resilient and how well connected to their environment they are. **Ms. Christina Henriksen, Sámi Council**, also mentioned the bankruptcy of many Sámi businesses and added that

the border closure has affected their livelihood. She gave the example of reindeer herding, as thousands of the animals have starved to death since the Sámi could not take care of them. This has impacted their food security as reindeer constitute one of their main sources of food and income. She thus called for the development of a sustainable economy that does not sacrifice human rights in the name of profit. **Denmark (on behalf of Canada, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, together with Greenland)** underlined the lack of access to proper healthcare for indigenous peoples during the pandemic and requested Member States to respect the UNDRIP during the pandemic.

Remarks were made and questions were raised by the participants. The representative of **Ukraine** responded to the remark made by the Russian Federation and reiterated that the Russian Federation has not helped the Crimean Tatars during the pandemic. **Someone** asked Member States to look at the impact of COVID-19 on pregnant women and newborn babies, as they belong to an at-risk group. **Mr. Lounes Belkacem, Member of the EMRIP**, said that there they witnessed more examples of violations of indigenous peoples' rights than examples of good practices. Finally, **someone** asked if the "*Nordic Saami Convention*" is relevant regarding the situation of Sámi people during the pandemic. Mr. Túomas Aslak Juuso responded by explaining that the convention had to be improved, first, due to some minor issues, which will help to harmonize the text. He added that the aim of the convention is to simplify the cross-borders situation in Sámi territory; thus, it will certainly affect the COVID-19 situation.

Mr. Rodion Sulyandziga, Member of the EMRIP, made concluding remarks. He said that, during the first wave of the pandemic, indigenous peoples living in remote areas of the Russian Federation were actually more protected, strangely enough, thanks to their isolation. However, this protection was challenged during the second phase, as help arrived and infrastructures were put in place, since this involved the arrival of people from outside the indigenous communities. He then explained that, due to the deterioration of the economic situation of the Russian Federation in 2020, indigenous peoples fear that after the pandemic there will be more misappropriation and devastation of natural resources. **Ms. Laila Vars, Chair of the EMRIP**, summarized all the major difficulties raised during the meeting. She then pointed out that many measures implemented by governments are criticized for not being appropriate or suitable for indigenous communities in many cases, as they focus on urban areas. She also mentioned that, due to their inability to carry out their usual activities, such as fishing, hunting and reindeer herding, indigenous businesses have declined economically. She finally concluded by asking Member States to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 on indigenous peoples, including actions taken by governments.

Thursday, 3 December

- **Regional Meeting: Central and South America and the Caribbean**

Ms. Erika Yamada, Member of the EMRIP, welcomed the participants and shared her condolences concerning those who have lost a family member during COVID-19.

Fundación Nacional del Indio en Brazil, explained how they have provided food supplies, fishing materials, seeds and tools to indigenous peoples living in remote areas all around the country. The representative also told the participants that the organisation has made sure to ban the entrance of strangers into indigenous territories. **Ms. Diana Paola Lozano, Organización Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonía Colombiana (OPIAC), Amazon Conservation Team – Colombia, DeJusticia, Fundación Gaia Amazonas, Sinergias-Alianzas Estratégicas para la Salud y el Desarrollo Social, Clínica Jurídica de Medio Ambiente y Sa-**

Iud Pública -MASP - Universidad de los Andes, highlighted the difficulties faced by indigenous peoples in Colombia as they suffer profoundly from COVID-19. Indigenous communities have had the highest death rate in the country, with no access to a hospital. They have had to combine their traditional medicine with western medicine in order to combat the virus. In addition, the situation has exacerbated domestic violence. **Peru** spoke about the fact that indigenous peoples in the country were already discriminated against before the pandemic, and that this has only increased during COVID-19. The representative added that the Government has worked with indigenous leaders to provide them with what they need, such as food supplies and medicine. **Ms. Myrna Cunningham Kain, Fondo para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y El Caribe (FILAC)** talked about the fact that the crisis has shown how resilient indigenous peoples have been during the pandemic, as FILAC has received hundreds of examples showing that they use their self-determination as part of their collective rights. She further said that indigenous peoples have revitalized their traditional customs during COVID-19, especially through the use of their traditional medicine. Finally, she encouraged Member States to properly share the vaccine among indigenous communities and to do it in accord with their customary laws. The representative of **Mexico** described how the Government has translated informative documents into indigenous languages. The Government also recommended that other Member States respect the UNDRIP, indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and their FPIC, while implementing measures to fight COVID-19. **Ms. Susy Gaby Díaz Gonzales, Organización Regional de la Asociación Inter-étnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana Ucayali-ORAU**, explained how indigenous peoples have used their traditional medicine to prevent and cure COVID-19 and how they have shared it with non-community members as well. She also highlighted the difficulties that indigenous communities have had to face, such as the loss of their income, as they have had to cease their agricultural and craft activities, and the fact that indigenous children could not study remotely due to the absence of computer equipment and an adequate Internet connection. Finally, she recommended the Peruvian Government to take measures to protect the indigenous defenders of their lands, as they have had to fight against intrusion and theft of their supplies during COVID-19. **Ms. Sylvia Hidalgo, Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos y Organizaciones indígenas en El Salvador**, described how the Government did not properly help indigenous communities during the pandemic. She therefore called on the Government to provide indigenous peoples with health-related equipment and food supplies, and to take measures in order to protect indigenous women from sexual assaults and femicide. **Mr. Alexandre Schaechtele, Organisation des Nations Autochtones de Guyane**, described how, despite the lock-down in French Guiana, the virus spread on the borders with Brazil due to the Brazilian president's lack of proper management. This situation has increased the discrimination already present against indigenous communities, and measures were taken without their FPIC. **Guatemala** said that informative documents had been translated and handed out to indigenous communities in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. **Mr. Alcalde Petero Edmunds Paoa, Pueblo Rapa Nui**, said that the pandemic was a time for them to reflect on the wisdom of their ancestors. Therefore, they took special care of their elders as keepers of their knowledge through the use of their traditional medicine. He added that, thanks to this, they were able to eradicate COVID-19 from Easter Island. The representative of **Venezuela** said that the government recognizes that indigenous peoples are among the vulnerable groups, which is why, in consultation with medical experts they developed a plan to stop the spread of COVID-19 among indigenous communities. **Ms. Elizangela da Silva Costa, Federação das Organizações Indígenas do Rio Negro (FOIRN) and Rede de Cooperação Amazônica (RCA)**, explained how they had closed their borders in order to avoid trafficking in their territories, and that they had asked to receive food and medical supplies. She also highlighted the role indigenous women have played during the pandemic, as supply managers and healers, using their traditional medicine. **Ms. Migdalia Pellicier, The United Confederation of Taino People - (UCTP) and The Caribbean Amerindian Development Organisation (CADO)**, called on governments to stop using the pandemic as an opportunity to destroy indigenous territories. She also described how, without the Government's help the Taino People produced their own hand sanitizer to fight

COVID-19. **Dr. Freddy Carrión Intriago, Defensor in Ecuador**, reiterated the importance of traditional medicine, especially in this time of pandemic. He further recommended that governments share information on COVID-19 with indigenous leaders and include them in the decision-making process as they belong to the most vulnerable groups. **Ms. Thelma Cabrera, Comité de Desarrollo Campesino (CODECA), Asociación B'elejeb' Tz'i', Franciscans International and Fastenopfer – Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund**, said that indigenous communities in Guatemala have only been receiving information in Spanish, exacerbating the spread of the virus. She further highlighted the increase in killings of human rights defenders, domestic violence against indigenous women, as well as the food insecurity resulting from the loss of their income. **Spain** reminded governments that indigenous peoples have the right to access appropriate health services. He also called on Member States to protect their human rights defenders as killings of the latter have escalated during the pandemic.

Remarks were made and questions were raised by the participants. The representative of **Peru** said that all the participants agreed on the fact that indigenous peoples are very vulnerable. This is a result of a lack of attention from governments and poor living conditions, which is why she recommended Member States to provide them with timely information during the pandemic and respond with culturally-appropriate measures in order to have good coordination with them. **Ms. Kristen Carpenter, Member of the EMRIP**, asked if the participants could share their examples of good practices during the pandemic. Ms. Sylvia Hidalgo answered the question by explaining how indigenous peoples of El Salvador have designed masks and manufactured soap and hand sanitizers using their traditional plants. She added that there was an ongoing communication among indigenous communities in order to monitor the situation. Ms. Myrna Cunningham Kain explained that a regional platform was created for indigenous peoples regarding COVID-19, on which they shared information and good practices. Ms. Migdalia Pellicier reiterated the importance of traditional medicine for indigenous peoples and shared a good practice from the Taino People, involving the production of a hand sanitizer.

Ms. Erika Yamada, Member of the EMRIP, made concluding remarks. She said that the implementation of measures must be accomplished through dialogue and consultations with indigenous peoples. She also highlighted the fact that cross-border communities need special attention, as their protection depends on more than one government. She then pointed out that indigenous peoples have been applying their right to self-determination due to the lack of support and investment from governments.

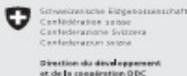
ANNEX I – LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EMRIP	Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
HRC	Human Rights Council
NSWALC	New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNVFIP	United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples

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