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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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Draft report

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Chapter I

Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention

B. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

Recommendations of the Permanent Forum

Future work of the Permanent Forum, including issues considered by the Economic and Social Council and emerging issues, specifically challenges related to pandemics and responses to them (item 7)

[NEW PARAGRAPH] The Permanent Forum expresses thanks to the Government of Finland for hosting its pre-session meeting for 2020. The Permanent Forum also expresses its thanks to the Governments of Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Canada, China, the Congo, Denmark, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Norway, the Russian Federation, Spain and the United States, as well as the government of Greenland, for having hosted previous pre-session and intersessional meetings of the Forum. The Forum



recommends that States that have not yet done so, consider hosting such meetings in the future. It also requests that the secretariat of the Forum organize pre-sessional meetings for future sessions of the Forum.

1. Across the globe, indigenous peoples have experienced epidemics and pandemics introduced by outsiders. The epidemics have often led to the dispossession of their lands and to the loss of lives, cultures and languages. The ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exposed and aggravated a range of pre-existing inequalities faced by indigenous peoples. In particular, it has highlighted the fact that indigenous peoples have inadequate access to infrastructure and services, including health care and education, and to markets; endure poor housing conditions; and experience diminished food security. These circumstances have led to disproportionately high infection and mortality rates among indigenous peoples in many countries.

2. Poor access to infrastructure and services has also exposed indigenous peoples to the indirect socioeconomic effects of the pandemic. The Permanent Forum is particularly concerned about the situation of indigenous children who have not received adequate education during the pandemic, especially in situations in which schools have been closed. The digital divide is a compounding factor that must be addressed with urgency in order to ensure that indigenous peoples are provided not only with access to information and communications technology but also with the necessary education and skills to be able to take advantage of that technology. Distance learning plans must include solutions that address the limited access to electricity, connectivity and the Internet.

3. Despite such challenges, indigenous peoples have exercised their self-determination and organized their own responses to the pandemic. They have relied on and revitalized traditional medicines and practices, established efficient alternative communication systems in their indigenous languages, shared food supplies and established procedures for lockdowns.

4. The Permanent Forum emphasizes the importance of the engagement and meaningful participation of indigenous peoples in the design and roll-out of measures taken to prevent the contagion, including through the non-discriminatory delivery and administration of vaccines, and in recovery plans and efforts. In that context, the important roles of indigenous women should not be overlooked. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Secretary-General's call to action on human rights provide important tools in guiding those efforts.

[ADDITIONAL PARAGRAPH] The permanent Forum welcomes efforts by member states to organize specific vaccine programs for indigenous peoples and encourages CEPI, Gavi, WHO and UNICEF in their administration of the COVAX Facility to ensure that indigenous peoples are uniquely included in vaccine dissemination efforts. Given the disproportionate effect COVID-19 has had on the mortality of Indigenous Peoples in many countries, the Permanent Forum underlines the urgency of ensuring that all Indigenous Peoples are uniquely considered in vaccine planning and distribution. Due attention should also be given to indigenous peoples affected by conflict- and post-conflict situations and complex humanitarian emergencies.

[ADDITIONAL PARAGRAPH] The Permanent Forum recognizes that due to historical and ongoing discriminatory practices in the delivery of healthcare, including administration of vaccines there is distrust that needs to be acknowledged and addressed by governments. Therefore, the Permanent Forum recommends that governments collaborate with indigenous peoples' representatives and leaders, provide culturally appropriate information in indigenous peoples' languages, engage with indigenous healthcare practitioners and provide support to indigenous peoples' organizations that are already providing pandemic related support in their communities.

Indigenous women and girls

5. The COVID-19 pandemic has particularly affected indigenous women and girls, who already face violence and higher rates of poverty, in conjunction with limited access to health-care services, information and communications technologies, financial services, education and employment, while also suffering from multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion. Violence against women and girls is a "shadow pandemic" that has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the closure of schools, pregnancy rates among indigenous young women and girls have risen. In that context, support for indigenous women's organizations and networks is vital since they are on the front lines of the responses to the pandemic.

Recommendations

6. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the urgent need for the collection of disaggregated statistical data on the situation of indigenous peoples. Where such data is available, it has shown that the pandemic has affected indigenous peoples differently than other populations, requiring culturally appropriate approaches and solutions. The Permanent Forum reiterates its recommendation to Member States to collect and disseminate disaggregated statistical data on indigenous peoples, in close cooperation with indigenous peoples themselves, to support evidence-based policymaking and programming.

7. The Permanent Forum recommends that the World Health Organization (WHO) create and convene regional round tables to address the issue of indigenous peoples and COVID-19 in order to ensure that the indigenous peoples of the globe are uniquely considered in mitigation efforts. Such round tables would also offer a timely opportunity to coordinate actions to respond to the impact on indigenous peoples of the pandemic.

8. The Permanent Forum also **invites recommends WHO and PAHO** to engage in an intersessional round table on COVID-19 with Forum members to ensure that ongoing mitigation planning and efforts are uniquely adapted to the needs of indigenous peoples, **including by applying the intercultural approaches to health such as those applied by PAHO in the Americas.**

9. The Permanent Forum recognizes the need to address the emergence of the mental health consequences of the pandemic. The consequences are being felt in all populations, but most acutely in populations that have traditionally been

marginalized. The Forum calls for investments and preparations for mental and behavioural health interventions that are culturally adapted. Traditional medicines and practices can play a key role in the health of indigenous communities and individuals by encompassing a variety of dimensions, including the spiritual. The Permanent Forum calls on the WHO/Pan American Health Organization, States Members of the United Nations and indigenous peoples to work together to provide pathways to promoting mental health.

10. The Permanent Forum recommends that WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, together with the Inter-agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, promote dialogue forums at the national and regional levels between government ministries and indigenous peoples to establish culturally relevant strategies to address the epidemiological risks and the food and environmental crises resulting from the pandemic, as well as access to justice and the safeguarding of indigenous peoples' territorial control.

11. Throughout history, indigenous peoples have moved from place to place in search of water, pastureland for their animals, and game; to trade goods from different ecological zones; and even to seek job opportunities in urban areas. Mobility restrictions both within and across State borders have affected indigenous peoples adversely, with the impact on pastoralist groups being particularly severe in the context of their ability to access water and food. The Permanent Forum recommends that States implement specific measures to address the mobility needs of indigenous peoples, including through cooperation with neighbouring States, and that such efforts be made with the full free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples affected.

12. The Permanent Forum welcomes the establishment of the Network of the Centers of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge under the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The Network, which comprises indigenous leaders, experts, professionals and advocates of indigenous and local knowledge, serves to promote the integrity and value of the knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities in science and policy. In addition, the Forum notes the aspects relevant to indigenous peoples that the Platform has rolled out until 2030 in its work programme, and in that regard seeks to further its collaboration with the Platform in its own future work. The Forum invites the Platform and the Network to continue to inform the Forum about the progress of its work, including at the Forum's twenty-first session.

13. The Permanent Forum **welcomes the entry into force of** ~~invites the States of the Latin American and Caribbean region and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, as its secretary, to initiate a process to establish consultations for the establishment of a subsidiary body for indigenous peoples, with the aim of implementing~~ the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazu Agreement) **on 22 April 2021 and urges those countries that have not yet signed and ratified the Agreement to do so at the earliest opportunity. The Permanent Forum urges those countries that have ratified the Escazu Agreement to ensure its implementation.**

14. During the pandemic, indigenous peoples have been seriously affected by a lack of access to energy, health-care establishments, education centres, infrastructure that supplies clean water, and communication services and information technologies. In their responses to the economic impacts of the pandemic, Governments have made a range of efforts to support economic activity. The relaxing of environmental and human rights standards in order to support activities that will promote economic growth, such as logging, mining, large-scale agriculture and various infrastructure and energy projects, threaten indigenous peoples' territories. The Permanent Forum requests Member States to include indigenous peoples in the preparatory process and the outcome of the high-level dialogue on energy to be held by the General Assembly in September 2021, in order to accelerate action on achieving Sustainable Development Goal 7 and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

15. The Permanent Forum welcomes the fact that the International Union for Conservation of Nature, in cooperation with indigenous peoples, is undertaking preparations for the World Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nature to be convened during the upcoming World Conservation Congress, which will be held in Marseille, France, in September 2021. The Summit is aimed at providing an opportunity to highlight and exchange information about the contributions of indigenous peoples to sustaining biodiversity, combating climate change and promoting sustainable development. The Forum recommends that Member States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations support the participation of indigenous peoples in the Summit. The Forum invites the International Union for Conservation of Nature to share the outcomes of the Summit at the Forum's twenty-first session.

[NEW PARAGRAPHS]

The Permanent Forum appoints Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim and Vital Bambanze, members of the Forum, to conduct a study on Indigenous Peoples and resource conflicts in the Sahel and Congo Basin and to present that study to the Forum at its twenty-first session, in 2022.

The Permanent Forum appoints Irma Pineda Santiago and Símon Freddy Condo Riveros, members of the Forum, to conduct a study on collective intellectual property and the appropriation of the ideas and creations of indigenous peoples and to present that study to the Forum at its twenty-first session, in 2022.

The Permanent Forum appoints Sven-Erik Soosaar, Irma Pineda Santiago and Bornface Museke Mate, members of the Forum, to conduct a study on indigenous languages in the formal education system and to present that study to the Forum at its twenty-first session, in 2022.

The Permanent Forum appoints Darío José Mejía Montalvo, member of the Forum, to conduct a study on the rights of Indigenous Peoples facing the global energy mix and to present that study to the Forum at its twenty-first session, in 2022.
