



International Indian Treaty Council
Consejo Internacional de Tratados Indios

100 E. Ajo Way
Tucson, AZ 85713
Phone: (520) 833-9797
Fax: (520) 833-9799
Email: info@treatycouncil.org
www.treatycouncil.org

**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 21st Session
25 April-6 May 2022**

**Agenda Item 4: Discussion on six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum
(economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health
and human rights), with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the
Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the outcome document of the World
Conference on Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development**

**Information Note submitted by the International Indian Treaty Council,
Indigenous Peoples Organization, regarding impacts of UNESCO's World Heritage
Sites on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on April 7, 2022**

On March 28, 2022, the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), an Indigenous Peoples Organization in General Consultative Status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council submitted a letter of urgent concern to the President of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) Inter-agency support group. The IITC shares these urgent concerns as expressed to UNESCO and endorsed by a large number of Indigenous Peoples, as follows:

The International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) calls on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to implement an immediate moratorium on creating new World Heritage Sites and calls upon UNESCO to monitor the activities of all parties involved in the implementation and maintenance of World Heritage Sites that are already established, and to implement a transparent, effective redress mechanism to ensure that the rights of Indigenous Peoples are fully respected, upheld and implemented on an ongoing basis. IITC also calls for full and transparent disclosure of all private, public, U.N. and NGO funding and financial transactions involved in the establishment, implementation and maintenance of Protected and Conservation Areas including World Heritage Sites and National Parks, and that this information be made available upon the request of the impacted Indigenous Peoples without delay.

The International Indian Treaty Council is an organization of Indigenous Peoples from North, Central, South America, the Caribbean and the Pacific working for the Sovereignty and Self Determination of Indigenous Peoples and the recognition and protection of Indigenous Rights, Treaties, Traditional Cultures and Sacred Lands. In 1977, IITC became

*Working for the Rights and Recognition of Indigenous Peoples
Trabajando por el reconocimiento y los derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas*

the first Indigenous Peoples' organization to be recognized as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) with Consultative Status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. In 2011, IITC was the first Indigenous organization to be upgraded to General Consultation Status in recognition of its active role in a wide range of international bodies and processes to ensure that the rights of Indigenous Peoples are recognized, respected and upheld.

UNESCO has implemented several World Heritage Sites that violate the rights of and harm Indigenous Peoples.

UNESCO World Heritage Committee has accepted petitions from Thailand and Tanzania to list the Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex and the Ngorongoro National Park, respectively, as World Heritage Sites even though Indigenous Peoples and human rights experts have expressed their concerns over doing so.

In Thailand, the Karen are facing mass forced evictions, mass arrests,¹ including at least one child, and their houses have been burnt.² Although, the World Heritage Committee denied petitions from Thailand twice, it accepted the third petition in 2021. For the Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex.³ Additionally, independent human rights monitors have been denied access to the Forest Complex by the Thailand Government.⁴

In Tanzania, the Maasai are facing 70,000 evictions as a recommendation from the World Heritage Committee under a “fortress conservation” approach.⁵ Despite nearly 500 organizations signing a letter by the Indigenous Peoples Rights International organization in February 2022 stating their concern over conservation sites in Tanzania and the treatment of the Maasai, the UNESCO Heritage Commission recommended a limit to human presence of the Ngorongoro National Park.⁶

Both of these examples show how the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, as stated by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Francisco Cali Tzay, “has adopted commitments towards Indigenous Peoples on paper but in practice does not have working methods that allow Indigenous Peoples to participate effectively and have their voices heard in the nomination process.”⁷

¹ <https://news.trust.org/item/20210727103427-u2dal>

² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27333&LangID=E>

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27333&LangID=E>

⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27333&LangID=E>

⁵ <https://iprights.org/news-and-events/press-releases/media-statement-on-the-threats-of-eviction-of-maasai-pastoralists-in-lo-liondo-area-and-the-ngorongoro-national-park-in-tanzania>

⁶ <https://iprights.org/news-and-events/press-releases/media-statement-on-the-threats-of-eviction-of-maasai-pastoralists-in-lo-liondo-area-and-the-ngorongoro-national-park-in-tanzania>

⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27333&LangID=E>

Other examples of UNESCO ignoring human rights obligations for Indigenous Peoples in its designations of World Heritage Sites include:

- The Salonga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in which the Mongo, Mbole, and the Twa that face extreme violence from eco-guards,⁸ including murder, sexual violence, torture, destruction of property and excessive and unlawful use of force.⁹
- The Western Ghats in India, in which the Adivasis of Kerala face large land dispossession. UNESCO and the Indian government failed to make public requested information by the International Union for Conservation of Nature before the 35th session of the World Heritage Committee which effectively withheld information from the Adivasis of Kerala and prevented them from responding at the 35th session.¹⁰
- The Chitwan National Park in Nepal, in which Chepang face destruction of homes, forced eviction, and torture.¹¹

These are but a few examples of many Indigenous Peoples adversely affected by UNESCO World Heritage Site designations.

Further, Article 41 of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states:

The organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations shall contribute to the full realization of the provisions of this Declaration through the mobilization, inter alia, of financial cooperation and technical assistance. Ways and means of ensuring participation of Indigenous Peoples on issues affecting them shall be established.

Additionally, Article 42 states:

The United Nations, its bodies, including the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and specialized agencies, including the country level, and States shall promote respect for and full application of the provisions of this Declaration and follow up the effectiveness of this Declaration.

UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee are failing to ensure that Indigenous Peoples are effectively involved, including engaging in the free, prior and informed consent of

⁸ <https://e360.yale.edu/features/green-violence-eco-guards-are-abusing-indigenous-groups-in-africa>

⁹ <https://www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/media/abf196ba-89da-4680-8df3-af5d382f7d5f>

¹⁰ <https://iwgia.org/images/documents/popular-publications/world-heritage-sites-final-eb.pdf>, 233-241

¹¹ <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358009095>

[UNESCO World Heritage and Human Rights Compliance](#)

Indigenous Peoples in the designation of World Heritage Sites. All U.N. bodies must implement the U.N. Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in full force.

Moreover, the IITC is gravely concerned over the use of para-militarized forces and eco-guards to enforce the “conservation” of World Heritage Sites, effectively dispossessing, murdering, sexually assaulting, torturing, and criminalizing Indigenous Peoples worldwide.

Until these concerns can be fully addressed to the satisfaction of effected Indigenous Peoples, the IITC calls on UNESCO to:

1. Implement an immediate moratorium on the creation of new World Heritage Sites.
2. Closely monitor the activities of all parties involved in the implementation and maintenance of World Heritage Sites that are already established.
3. Implement a transparent, effective redress mechanism to ensure that the rights of Indigenous Peoples are fully respected, upheld and implemented on an ongoing basis.
4. The full and transparent disclosure of all private, public, U.N. and NGO funding and financial transactions involved in the establishment, implementation and maintenance of Protected and Conservation Areas including World Heritage Sites and National Parks. This information must be made available upon the request of the impacted Indigenous Peoples without delay.

Signatories and Supporters:

Affiliates of IITC

Latin America Region, Central America

Guatemala:

1. Defensoria Maya
2. Fundacion Rigoberta Menchu
3. Comite de la Unidad Campesina (CUC)
4. Centro de Proyectos para el Desarrollo Integral Indígena (CEPRODI)
5. Centro Pluricultural para la Democracia (CPD)
6. Oxlajuj Ajpop de los Ajq'ijab' (Conferencia Nacional de Ministros de la Espiritualidad Maya de Guatemala)
7. Consejo de los Aj'quija'b
8. La Union Nacional Campesina
9. Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala (CONAVIGUA)
10. Asociación de Asentamientos Unidos del Área Ixil -ASAUNIXIL-

Panama:

11. Movimiento de la Juventud Kuna
12. Asociación Napguana
13. Congreso General Kuna
14. Fundación Para la Promoción de Conocimiento Indígena

El Salvador:

15. Asociación Nacional Indígena de El Salvador (ANIS)

Nicaragua:

16. Consejo de Ancianos de la Nación Comunitaria Moskitia
17. Centro para la Autonomía y Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (CADPI)

Mexico:

18. Congreso Nacional Indígena de Mexico
19. Asamblea Nacional Indígena Plural por la Autonomía (ANIPA),
20. Consejo de Pueblos Nahuas del Alto Balsas, Guerrero, A.C.
21. Traditional Authorities, Pueblo de Huirivis, Rio Yaqui, Sonora
22. Traditional Authorities, Pueblo de Potam, Rio Yaqui, Sonora
23. Traditional Authorities, Pueblo de Torim, Rio Yaqui, Sonora
24. Traditional Authorities, Pueblo de Bacum, Rio Yaqui, Sonora
25. Unidad De la Fuerza Indígena y Campesina (UFIC)
26. Red Indígena de Turismo A.C. (RITA)
27. Jittoa- Bat-Natika-Weria (Río Yaqui, Sonora)
28. Di Sugave a Nana Shimjai, San Francisco Magu
29. Proyecto de Desarrollo Rural Integral Vicente Guerrero A.C.
30. Asamblea de los Pueblos Indígenas por la Soberanía Alimentaria en México (APISA)

Latin American Region, South America

Chile:

31. Ad-MAPU

Brazil:

32. Indigenous Women's Educational Group (GRUMIN)

Argentina:

33. Asociación Indígena Argentina (AIRA)
34. Asociación de Mujeres Abogadas Indígenas (AMAI)

Ecuador:

35. La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador
(CONAIE: Shuar, Achuar, Siona, Secoya, Cofán, Huaorani, Záparo, Chachi,
Tsáchila, Awá, Epera, Manta, Wancavilca and Quichua Indigenous Peoples).

Columbia:

36. Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC)
37. Uw'a Nation

Bolivia:

38. La Confederación Nacional de Naciones Indígenas Originarias de Bolivia
(CONNIOB)

Caribbean Region:

39. United Confederation of Taino People: Borikén (Puerto Rico), Kiskeia, (Dominican Republic),
40. Barbados, Guyana (Arawaks), Bimini (United States)
41. Caribbean Amerindian Development Organisation (CADO)

North America Region

United States:

42. National Native American Prisoners' Rights Coalition
43. White Clay Society/Blackfoot Confederacy (Montana)
44. Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN)
45. Columbia River Peoples (Washington/Oregon)
46. Rural Coalition Native American Task Force (Minnesota)
47. Yoemem Tekia Foundation, Pascua Yaqui Nation (Arizona)
48. Tohono O'odham Nation Traditional community (Arizona)
49. Pit River Tribe (California)
50. Wintu Nation (California)
51. Redding Rancheria (California)
52. Tule River Nation (California)
53. Muwekma Ohlone Nation (California)
54. Coyote Valley Pomo Nation (California)
55. Round Valley Pomo Nation (California)
56. Oklahoma Region Indigenous Environmental Network (Oklahoma)

57. Wanblee Wakpeh Oyate (South Dakota)
58. IEN Youth Council
59. Independent Seminole Nation of Florida (Florida)
60. Cactus Valley/Red Willow Springs Big Mountain Sovereign Diné Community (Arizona)
61. Leonard Peltier Defense Committee
62. Eagle and Condor Indigenous Peoples' Alliance (Oklahoma)
63. Seminole Sovereignty Protection Initiative (Oklahoma)
64. Mundo Maya (California)
65. Los Angeles Indigenous Peoples Alliance (California)
66. American Indian Treaty Council Information Center (Minnesota)
67. Vallejo Inter-Tribal Council (California)
68. Three Fires Ojibwe Cultural and Education Society (Minnesota)
69. California Indian Environmental Alliance (CIEA)
70. Wicapi Koyaka Tiospaye (South Dakota)
71. Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative (Oklahoma)
72. Light is Life Youth Food Sovereignty Project
73. Buffalo Council (Colorado/National)
74. Océ Vpofa/Hickory Grounds Tribal Town (Alabama/Oklahoma)
75. United Tribes of Michigan
76. Alliance of Colonial Era Tribes (ACET) (Haliwa Saponi Indian Tribe, Lenape Indian Tribe of Delaware, Lipan Apache Tribe of Texas, Lumbee Tribe, Monacan Indian Nation, MOWA)
77. Band of Choctaw, Nanticoke Indian Tribe, Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation, Pocasset Tribe, Rappahannock Tribe, United Houma Nation, Upper Mattoaponi)
78. Inhanktonwan Treaty Committee (Yankton Sioux Tribe)
79. Sicangu Lakota Treaty Council (Rosebud Sioux Tribe)
80. Schaghticoke First Nations

Canada:

81. Sovereign Nations of Treaties 1 – 11 (227 Treaty Nations in Canada)

Arctic Region

Alaska:

82. Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government/ Arctic Village Traditional Council
83. Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Chickaloon Native Village
84. Stevens Village Traditional Council
85. Native Village of Eklutna

Pacific Region:

Hawaii:

- 86. Sovereign Nation of Hawaii
- 87. Aloha First, Hawaii

Aotearoa/New Zealand:

- 88. Kirikiriroa Marae
- 89. Tauranga Moana Marae
- 90. Maori Women's Resource Center
- 91. Te Whanua o te Rau Aroha
- 92. Waitangi Action Committee
- 93. Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Network
- 94. Te Paepae Arahi Trust
- 95. Te Manu Kawe I te Matauranga
- 96. Bangsa AdatAlifuru in Maluku (The Indigenous Alifuru People of Maluku)
- 97. Saniri Alifuru (Alifuru Council)
- 98. Te Rau Matatini

West Papua:

- 99. Dewan Adat Papua (Papua Customary Council)

Multi Regional/Multi-National:

- 100. North-South Indigenous Network Against Pesticides
- 101. International Indian Women's Environmental and Reproductive Health Network
- 102. Indigenous Peoples Working Group on Toxics

**Additional Supporters attending IITC's 47th Anniversary Treaty Conference held
March 1-3, 2022 in Panajachel, Sololá Guatemala**

- 1. Asociación de Forestería de Guatemala Utz Che' (buen Árbol)
- 2. Asociación de Asentamientos Unidos del Área Ixil, Nebaj Quiché-ASAUNIXIL
- 3. Asociación de Abogadas Indígenas Chomija
- 4. Federación Indígena Empresarial y Comunidades Locales de México A.C. (CIELO)
- 5. MOVIMIENTO NACIONAL DE TEJEDORAS MAYA DE GUATEMALA
- 6. Asociación Ak'tenamit
- 7. Fundación Rigoberta Menchú Tum
- 8. Movimiento Nacional de Comadronas Nim Alaxik
- 9. CONFEDERACIÓN DE MUJERES INDÍGENAS CAMPESINAS POR LA PAZ
MOLBAL IXOJ

10. Asociación de Mujeres Abogadas Indígenas
11. Instituto Mesoamericano de Permacultura IMAP
12. Consejo de Ajq'ijab' Oxlajuj Ajpop/Centro de Investigación de la Ciencia Maya Oxlajuj Baqtun
13. Asociación de Abogados y Notorios Mayas de Guatemala
14. Fratamid Oslajuj B'actun
15. ASECSA
16. Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas (FIMI)
17. Consejo Coordinador Del Pueblo Xinka de Guatemala
18. Comité Pro-Mantenimiento de Bienes Comunes y Título Territorial
19. Alianza de Autoridades Ancestrales Ajpop Tinamit
20. Asociación Bugete Jurídico Popular, Universidad Maya Kaqchikel/Guatemala
21. Autoridad Ancestral de Santiago Sacatepéquez