

UN Women statement on the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

Date: 09 August 2018

UN Women joins our sister UN agencies in today's recognition of the vital importance of the world's indigenous peoples. At a time when human mobility is on the increase, we recognize that together, they maintain 80 percent of global biodiversity. All of humanity is indebted to their custodianship. Indeed, if we are to achieve Agenda 2030 and SDG 15, to sustainably manage life on land, this vital contribution must be urgently recognized and protected. It is time that we all listen to what indigenous people have to say, and pay close attention, especially to the knowledge and concerns of the world's indigenous women.

There are many reasons for people to leave their homes, with that mobility often bringing positive socioeconomic change, including improved incomes and GDP growth. However, when mobility is coerced or triggered by conflict, deprivation, or environmental stresses, indigenous women and girls are at heightened risk of consequences such as violence and loss of livelihoods.

A 2016 McKinsey Report on migration found that the likelihood of migration caused by climate change is greater in coastal areas, which face increased risk of flooding caused not only by rising sea levels, but the destruction of the coral reefs that act as a buffer for wave action. The report shows that flooding poses a "catastrophic" risk to coastal populations. We are seeing this effect already on people living in the Solomon Islands. Whole regions, like Southeast Asia, home to many diverse ethnic minorities, will be vulnerable to this risk in future.

The 2018 Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues found that extractive industries and large-scale infrastructure projects pose additional threats to indigenous people and the land they protect and depend upon, such as sexual and gender-based violence, displacement and forced migration. These violations result in family and community disintegration, with harmful consequences on the ability of indigenous women to access essential services, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and justice and reparation.

At UN Women we know that when resources grow scarce, whether through climate change, land dispossession, natural disasters, economic or conflict issues, it is women who bear most of the responsibility for working harder and travelling further to find ways to feed their households. When indigenous peoples are forced to migrate, it is women who are the most vulnerable to violence and exploitation as they try to start a new life for themselves and those in their care. This is why, when UN Women conducted

consultations to finalize the draft bill on Ending Violence against Women in Nepal, we made sure that we consulted with women representatives from the indigenous Tharu, Muslim and Madesi groups.

UN Women is working in several areas to ensure that indigenous peoples' voices are heard and that their experiences inform our approaches to ending violence against women and girls. In Lenca, Honduras, we are supporting the development of the Gender Strategy for indigenous women. In Kenya, we have provided Disaster Risk Reduction sensitization to indigenous women. In Columbia, we support awareness forums for counsellors, authorities and indigenous guards on the prevention of gender-based violence in the Awá territory.

As we celebrate today, let each of us commit to making the voices of indigenous peoples, and indigenous women, louder and more impactful than ever before.