



THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

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Press release

Indigenous peoples role in achieving peace, justice and strong institutions at the centre of UN annual forum

New York, 19 April 2021 – The largest global gathering on indigenous issues, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will run in a mostly virtual format from 19 to 30 April 2021. This year’s session is focused on Peace, justice and strong institutions: the role of indigenous peoples in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16), as enshrined in the universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly in 2007, is the most comprehensive international instrument on the rights of indigenous peoples, and provides references to peace, justice and strong institutions for indigenous peoples,” said Anne Nuorgam, Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

“Nevertheless, indigenous peoples still suffer grave human rights violations from the aftermaths of historical injustices, without redress or reconciliation, and in some instances, they lack recognition of their existence and respect for their fundamental human rights and institutions,” she added.

The Forum’s opening and closing sessions traditionally bring together indigenous peoples from around the world in the iconic UN General Assembly Hall. This year, smaller, in-person opening and closing sessions on 19 and 30 April and virtual meetings, will ensure that the Forum continues its critical work despite the pandemic.

The Permanent Forum will also discuss COVID-19: building back better and its far-reaching [implications for indigenous peoples](#), the upcoming [International Decade of Indigenous Languages \(2022-2032\)](#), and the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). Human rights and challenges faced by indigenous human rights defenders will feature prominently in the dialogues with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on 22 April.

The session will open on Monday, 19 April, at 3 p.m. with a ceremonial welcome by the Chief of the Onondaga Nation, Tadodaho Sidney Hill. Video messages will be delivered by the United Nations Secretary-General, His Excellency António Guterres; Vice President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, His Excellency, David Choquehuanca Cespedes; Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, His Excellency Pekka Haavisto; and Secretary of the Interior of the United States of America, Her Excellency Debra Haaland. Statements will be made by the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Volkan Bozkir; the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, His Excellency Juan Sandoval Mendiola (Mexico); the Chair of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Ms. Anne Nuorgam; and Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist, Mr. Elliott Harris, delivering a statement of behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Liu Zhenmin.

Side events

Over 80 side events are scheduled to take place during the two-week session, organized by indigenous peoples' organizations, UN Member States, UN entities, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and other stakeholders. All side events are organized virtually. The full list of side events is published at <https://bit.ly/UNPFII2021>

Background

Indigenous peoples make up less than 6 per cent of the world's population, but account for 15 per cent of the poorest. They live across some 90 countries, represent 5,000 different cultures and speak an overwhelming majority of the world's estimated 6,700 languages.

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was established by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2000. The Forum provides expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to the UN System through ECOSOC; raises awareness and promotes the integration and coordination of relevant activities within the UN System; and disseminates information on indigenous issues.

The Permanent Forum comprises 16 independent experts, functioning in their personal capacity. ECOSOC appoints the members, eight of whom are nominated by governments and eight by indigenous peoples' organizations from the different regions of the world. The Forum has gained increasing recognition and impact as the global platform for dialogue, cooperation and concrete action on indigenous peoples, with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the fundamental framework.

Due to COVID-19, the Indigenous Media Zone will not take place this year.

For media queries please contact Julia Hagl at hagl@un.org – United Nations Department of Global Communications.

For more information on the twentieth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, please see <https://bit.ly/UNPFII2021>