Submitted to the Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

“The First Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Indigenous Peoples’ Rights”
Side event for 20th Session of the UNPFII
Summary of Key Issues and Recommendations

Draft recommendation that emerged from the discussion for consideration by the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues:

“The Permanent Forum welcomes the launch of online courses on Indigenous Peoples’ rights in recent months by Columbia University, OHCHR and Tribal Link Foundation, and recommends to academia, Indigenous and other organizations and the UN system to seek ways to provide access to these courses to Indigenous Peoples in remote areas without internet or digital devices. Special efforts should be made to make such courses available in various languages, including Indigenous languages, and to make them accessible to Indigenous youth. The Permanent Forum also recommends the incorporation of more Indigenous knowledge into universities; designing online course content addressing specific local and national Indigenous issues in different countries, and increased participation and voices of Indigenous Peoples in online courses.”

Overview
On April 20, 2021, a side event for the 20th Session of the UNPFII was organized by Columbia University’s Institute for the Study of Human Rights. It was held virtually via Zoom, and was moderated by the instructor of the MOOC, Professor Elsa Stamatopoulou of Columbia University, and included presentations by: Andrea Carmen of the International Indian Treaty Council; Stephanie Grepo of Columbia University; Sheryl Lightfoot of the University of British Columbia; Aehshatu Manu, Secretary General of the African Indigenous Women Organization Central African Network; Maurice Matiz of Columbia University; Cecilia Ramirez of the International Indigenous Women’s Forum; Elifuraha Laltaika of Tumaini University Makumira Arusha; and Binalakshmi Nepram of the Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network & Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace.

Background
The panel was dedicated to a discussion of the “Indigenous Peoples’ Rights” Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), which was launched on 28 October 2020 through the Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) at Columbia University. To date, 2,218 people have enrolled in the course from at least 111 countries. The course is geared to a broad audience, Indigenous Peoples, government officials, UN and other IGO officials, foundations, NGOs, private sector; the MOOC’s student ages have so far ranged from 15 to 74; this MOOC has seen an unusually high number of participants opt to take the course for a certificate (over 500). As Professor Stamatopoulou stressed in her opening remarks, the course is meant to widely disseminate information to a broad community of learners to foster greater understanding and implementation
of Indigenous Peoples’ rights world-wide: “After UNDRIP’s adoption, all actors interested in and working with Indigenous Peoples-Indigenous Peoples themselves, government officials, UN and other IGO officials, foundations, NGOs, private sector—all should have the knowledge so as to able to engage and relate with Indigenous peoples based on the rights recognized in the Declaration.” A summary of the MOOC’s presentation is annexed.

Key Issues
The panel and discussion raised the following main points: the growth of the Indigenous Peoples’ movement over the decades; the critical importance of online education, as modeled in this MOOC, for the dissemination of knowledge about Indigenous Peoples’ rights as outlined in UNDRIP; the current lack of enough learning spaces dedicated to Indigenous Peoples’ rights; both dutybearers who have to implement Indigenous Peoples’ rights and the Indigenous rights-holders need to know these rights so that they can claim and implement them; the pressing need for more learning spaces, tools, and international solidarity in the effort to realize these rights; this MOOC will help to catalyze these critical processes of learning, connecting and building networks; in the words of Elifuraha Laltaika, “The MOOC is an indispensable tool when it comes to Indigenous human rights education and the implementation of rights.” Several participants noted that one of the primary advantages of the online format is that it multiplies how many people can be reached and thus extends the scope of the work. Aehshatu Manu noted that it allows for people to acquire knowledge from any part of the world, without having to leave their homes or travel great distances. Professor Lightfoot observed that in any given year, she can only teach a maximum of 100 students, but the MOOC can reach thousands.

Challenges underlined by multiple participants were issues of access to online courses, especially for Indigenous Peoples living in remote regions without internet or digital devices. Binalakshmi Nepram stated: “There is a digital divide, in which many Indigenous Peoples will not be able to take this course. How do we not get left behind?” Cecilia Ramirez added, “If this course can reach people who are in these contexts, in remote areas, it would be a significant achievement.” Other panelists stressed that currently, universities in most countries do not incorporate Indigenous knowledge into their courses, and this MOOC can help to begin to address this dearth of Indigenous content in higher education. The panel concluded with a strong consensus on the importance of continuous learning for sustaining the Indigenous Peoples’ rights movement, and the need for more widely accessible online learning opportunities geared at diverse audiences.

Recommendations
The panel’s recommendations included:

1. Seeking ways to **provide access** to this course program to Indigenous Peoples in remote areas without internet or digital devices
2. Offering this course in **Indigenous languages** around the world
3. Seeking ways to reach the **next generation of Indigenous youth** so that they will be informed and step up as advocates
4. **Replicating such online courses** with a global lens by other public and private universities, especially in countries with significant populations of Indigenous Peoples
5. Incorporating more **Indigenous knowledge** into universities
6. Designing online course content addressing specific local and national Indigenous issues in different countries, and

7. Addressing the need for increased participation and voices of Indigenous Peoples in future online courses

These recommendations have implications for this specific MOOC, as well as providing guidance for other, related MOOCs offered by other institutions in the future.

Annex

Summary presentation of the Massive Open Online Course on Indigenous Peoples’ Rights by Elsa Stamatopoulou at the launch/presentation, Side Event at UNPFII 20

Training and learning opportunities on Indigenous Peoples’ rights have been expanding, but they are clearly too few to cover the needs of Indigenous Peoples, UN agencies and other IGOs, government officials, foundations, NGOs, researchers and others. After UNDRIP’s adoption, all actors interested in and working with Indigenous Peoples should have the knowledge so as to be able to engage and relate with Indigenous Peoples based on the rights recognized in the Declaration. This first Massive Open Online Course on Indigenous Peoples’ Rights is designed for a wide audience. It also has a global lens. In the last five months, more than 2165 people have been taking the Course from at least 110 countries.

The Course, prepared by the Institute for the Study of Human rights at Columbia University, is composed of five Modules and the topics and approach are based on the way Indigenous Peoples have articulated and internationalized their issues in the past 50 years. Module 1 is an overview of the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights movement and its achievements at the international level, with special focus on the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the internationalization of Indigenous Peoples’ issues. Module 2 is about the right to self-determination: how it is reflected in the UNDRIP; the role of free, prior and informed consent; the issue of treaties between States and Indigenous Peoples; self-determined development, and also the Sustainable Development Goals. Module 3 is on the right to land, territories: the significance of this right for Indigenous Peoples, especially that of collective ownership; the main points on land rights in the Declaration, including subsistence rights, restitution and compensation; and Indigenous Peoples Impacts on international environmental and climate change debates. Module 4 focuses on cultural rights, the violations that Indigenous Peoples face, the responses of the Declaration, the protection of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge, and the significance of cultural rights in mending historical injustices. Module 5 covers the Indigenous-related UN bodies, their mandates and concrete work and stresses the significance of human rights advocacy. The Module thus discusses the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

LINK TO ALL RELEVANT INFO
http://www.humanrights.columbia.org/events/first-massive-open-online-course-indigenous-peoples-rights
**Expert interviews** for the Course have been given by: Andrea Carmen, Executive Director, International Indian Treaty Council (Yaqui Nation); Sandra Creamer, Board Member, International Indigenous Women’s Forum (Wannyi/Kalkadoon, Australia); Aviâja Egede Lynge (Inuk, Greenland); Sheryl Lightfoot, Associate Professor, Political Science, School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, and First Nations and Indigenous Studies, The University of British Columbia, and newly-elected Member of EMRIP, (Anishinaabe); Aehshatu Manu, Secretary General, African Indigenous Women Organization Central African Network (Mbororo, Cameroon); Cecilia Ramirez, Coordinator of the Global School for Indigenous Women, International Indigenous Women’s Forum (Mixteco (Ñuu Saú), Mexico); Elifuraha Laltaika, Law Lecturer of Tumaini University Makumira, Arusha, (Maasai, Tanzania); Binalakshmi (Bina) Nepram, Founder, Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network & Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace (Manipuri, India); Platon Shamayev, Lawyer, Sakha Republic, Russian Federation.

An **extensive bibliography and visual material** are also offered through this Course.