



Florida High Schools Model United Nations

FHSMUN 44

# **UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME**

## **INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

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*“The relationship that resulted in the climate crisis has been foretold by native peoples from the outset. It is a sensitive intelligence to understand that there are things that need to be stabilized in the Earth’s organism. Colonialism does not recognize natural borders, it invades everything furiously.*

Ailton Krenak, Krenak journalist and Indigenous activist  
Conectas News, 23 September 2021



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### COMMITTEE BRIEF

#### Introduction

There is no official, universal checklist for what makes any one individual, state, or practice Indigenous. The United Nations recognizes Indigenous peoples as those that “have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live.”<sup>1</sup> According to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, these characteristics are as follows: “self- identification as Indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member; historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies; strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources; distinct social, economic or political systems; distinct language, culture and beliefs; form non-dominant groups of society; resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.”<sup>2</sup> There are an estimated 300 to 370 million Indigenous people in the world; examples of such peoples include the Lakota in the United States, the Saami in Northern Europe, and the Māori in New Zealand.<sup>3</sup> The 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was passed as a framework for the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in state decision-making.<sup>4</sup>

Indigenous peoples have a unique relationship with the territories upon which they live. These lands hold central roles in their spiritual beliefs, political systems, and way of sustenance. In the ongoing climate crisis, however, these lands are in increasing danger of natural disasters such as drought, flooding, and wildfires, and widespread community displacement to non-cultural territories is imminent. Changing environmental patterns also pose significant risk to the loss of spiritual traditions and traditional agricultural practices. Indigenous people make up nearly one-third of the world’s extremely poor rural people, and are especially vulnerable to environmental racism and injustice.<sup>5</sup> The future wellbeing of Indigenous communities in every nation is dependent on the delegate’s ability to: address the movement for environmental justice

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). "Indigenous Peoples." UN Development, last modified 2021, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/Indigenouspeoples/about-us.html#:~:text=Indigenous%20Peoples%20are%20inheritors%20and,societies%20in%20which%20they%20live>.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). "Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations." Factsheet, 5th session, 2006, [https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session\\_factsheet1.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> United Nations. "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." General Assembly, Resolution A/RES/61/295, 2007, [https://www.un.org/development/desa/Indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/Indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). "The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Indigenous Peoples." UN Development, last modified 2021, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/Indigenouspeoples/focus-areas/post-2015-agenda/the-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-Indigenous/mdgs.html>



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through the Indigenous perspective; destigmatize Indigenous stereotypes and misconceptions; meaningfully include Indigenous stakeholders in high-level decisions.

### **The Indigenous Peoples' Environmental Crisis**

Indigenous and environmental rights are deeply interlinked, and the fight for environmental rights is one that is commonly becoming more and more prevalent. Indigenous peoples' territories consist of nearly a quarter of the earth's land surface and are estimated to contain approximately 80% of global biodiversity,<sup>6</sup> while Indigenous groups only make up less than 5% of the world population. Oftentimes, Indigenous people hold a unique bond with the land and territories upon which they live – yet only about 10% of Indigenous peoples and local communities have legal rights to land that they depend on for their livelihood.<sup>7</sup>

When a territory is converted in any way, it can lead to devastating results that force Indigenous peoples out of their land communities to which they have held for generations, with little to no compensation or voice to protest. This is an infringement of their environmental rights by loss of their lands, resources, and cultural heritage. Indonesian land rights activist Hermanus Bin Bison was arrested on 17 February 2020 in Penyan Village in Central Kalimantan and died shortly thereafter while being held in custody for harvesting palm oil fruit from land his community claims. Hermanus became detained after the palm oil company PT Hamparan Masawit Bangun Persada (HMBP) filed a complaint. A formal concession agreement was drawn up in 2006 between HMBP and the community that Hermanus was a part of. However, since the agreement, HMBP has repeatedly been accused of conducting illegal operations outside of the concession agreement – but has never received any legal sanction from the local or central government. Bison was confined to a small jail cell while undergoing medical distress. Despite requests from legal counsel to allow him access to a medical doctor, they were denied. Bison was required to present at trial in a wheelchair while under medical distress, leading to a deterioration in his health and, eventually, his death.<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, this is not a unique story. Bison is one of many environmental defenders who have paid the ultimate price for protecting Indigenous lands that they inhabit from outside organizations or governments. Business, criminal groups, and governments have consistently and violently displaced communities from ancestral lands for thousands of years. Between 2012 and 2021, organizations and rights groups documented the deaths of 1,700 environmental and land

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<sup>6</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). "Language on Indigenous Peoples' Rights Should Stay in the New Global Biodiversity Framework for the Benefit of Communities and Nature." SIPRI Commentary, 2022, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2022/language-Indigenous-peoples-rights-should-stay-new-global-biodiversity-framework-communities-nature>

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Defenders Memorial. "Hermanus Bin Bison." Human Rights Defender Record, accessed February 7, 2023, <https://hrdmemorial.org/hrdrecord/hermanus-bin-bison/>



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defenders from 60 countries, 35% of those killed identified as Indigenous - and over the last three years the rate at which Indigenous activities were killed was even higher than previous years. While they make up for 5% of the world's population, Indigenous people were victims of more than 41% of fatal attacks documented against environmental defenders in 2021 across countries such as Mexico, Colombia, Nicaragua, Peru and the Philippines.<sup>9</sup>

While Indigenous people are continually fighting against governments, individuals and stakeholders for the very land that has passed through generations upon generations – Indigenous peoples and local communities are fighting against the one enemy we all have in common: climate change. No matter if it is the Arctic or tropical forests, original inhabitants of regions throughout the world have built a foundation that has passed through generations, down to the Indigenous peoples there today who now live upon the very same land that their ancestors once did – and now are becoming increasingly affected by climate change on tribal and Indigenous communities. Yet, these territories that are being fought and capitalized over, removing traces of what make these territories, like the Amazon rainforest, adept at continuing the fight *against* climate change.

The Yanomami have inhabited vast areas of the Amazon rainforest for generations and have largely remained isolated from the outside world – until now. Today, the Yanomami are fighting to survive, else they risk losing their lands, culture and their traditional way of life due to the minerals and other lucrative materials found within the forest that attract illegal prospectors to cut down trees, poison rivers and pollute water systems.<sup>10</sup> Local officials estimate that there are more than 20,000 illegal gold miners, known as *garimperios*, on Yanomami territory, despite the territory being nationally protected.<sup>11</sup> The act of illegal mining from *garimperios* can not only accelerate the climate crisis through illegal deforestation by destroying trees and habitats, but the mercury from the mining is leaking into rivers and poisoning water in ways that eventually harm the Indigenous communities presiding in the area.

Despite attempts to negate the efforts of *garimperios* around the world, often environmental racism and colonial legacies hold back attempts to change the status quo. During the colonial period, European colonizers subjected Indigenous peoples to exploitative practices – including bound labor, forced displacement, resource extraction and more; all of which resulted in the degradation of their lands and the subsequent environmental hazards. This behavior is still prevalent today in communities around the world, where often, the supposed ‘benefits’ of

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<sup>9</sup> Deutsche Welle (DW). "Defending the Environment Can Be a Death Sentence." DW News, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/defending-the-environment-can-be-a-death-sentence/a-63837132>

<sup>10</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). "Amazon Rainforest: Indigenous Tribe Fights for Survival." OHCHR Stories, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/08/amazon-rainforest-Indigenous-tribe-fights-survival>

<sup>11</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). "Amazon Rainforest: Indigenous Tribe Fights for Survival." OHCHR Stories, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/08/amazon-rainforest-Indigenous-tribe-fights-survival>



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capitalism hold more ‘rights’ to land than the very people who have nurtured, cared, and tended to for hundreds of years. It is imperative delegates understand the array of Indigenous peoples’ within their own state, and the on-going exploitative natures occurring within their own borders.

### **Conflicting Demands: Indigenous Peoples Versus The State**

While Indigenous people around the globe are fighting against governments, individuals, and stakeholders from the land upon which they reside from the harmful impact of their presence, it should not be misconceptualized that Indigenous people are not exactly complete leave-no-trace, perfect stewards of the land.

While Indigenous peoples are dependent on land, they should not be written off as or praised for being perfect conservationists. In effort to combat exploitation of their lands, many Indigenous groups have instituted land-management regimes. However, without proper consultation, these conservation projects risk leading to perpetuating colonial legacies and becoming unsuccessful in their attempt to protect the land upon which they tried to reserve or maintain – even more so, what is good for an Indigenous group, is not necessarily sometimes always good or benefits the general public as well.

For example, the Three Gorges Dam is a hydroelectric gravity dam that spans the Yangtze River in the Hubei province of China. The Three Gorges Dam was constructed in 2006 and became fully functional and complete in 2012. While the dam’s primary job is to produce electricity, it has also led to an increase in the Yangtze River’s shipping capacity and has reduced the potential of floods downstream – which have historically plagued the region and contributed to upwards of 4 million deaths. However, while the dam underwent construction, the project faced backlash due to the need to relocate 1.3 million people because their homes and fields were submerging into the reservoir. Residents of the impacted regions protested, as an effort to keep their traditions and settlements intact – including the Tibetans living in the Sichuan province.<sup>12</sup>

Many aspects of the movement for Indigenous rights are often in direct opposition to the dominant culture. Oftentimes, it is misconceptualized or used to promote an agenda – without fulfilling any promises made. Rafael Correa, a middle-class mestizo, became president of Ecuador in 2007. Under his administration, Correa worked alongside Indigenous groups in order to introduce a new constitution that reframed public policy to support the conservation of nature by utilizing Indigenous methodology. This led to Indigenous worldviews that prioritize harmony with nature over economic development to become enshrined within the Ecuadorian Constitution. The Ecuadorian Constitution of 2008 declares:

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<sup>12</sup> Cultural Survival Quarterly. "China's Three Gorges Project: Whose Dam Business Is It?". Cultural Survival, vol. 22, no. 1, 1998, <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/chinas-three-gorges-project-whose-dam-business-it>



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*"We ... hereby decide to build a new form of public coexistence, in diversity and in harmony with nature, to achieve the **good way of living**."*

This "good way of living" (*Buen Vivir* in Spanish) is found within the Quechua people of the Andes, of "*sumac kawsay*," a *kichwa* term which denotes the fullness of life, rooted in community and harmony with other people and nature. The constitution, drawing upon Indigenous traditions like this, build on philosophies of development that seek to reject the neoliberal logic of 'extractivism' – a view that sees the natural world largely as an inexhaustible supply of resources available for exploitation. As 'extractivism' has led to devastating impacts in Latin America. These reforms signal to the globe that Ecuador seeks geological balance over industrialization and development - however, it may seem just that - a signal.<sup>13</sup>

It is fair to question Correa's intent with this 'good way of living' – as Rafael Correa is not of Indigenous descent, nor does he have a background in social movements. During Correa's campaign, the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de Ecuador (CONAIE) proposed the development of a new constitution that recognized Indigenous rights. He adopted this proposal in his presidential campaign, which won Correa the support of CONAIE and a significant Indigenous population of Ecuador. Once Correa won his presidency, he developed constituent assemblies that had strong representation of Indigenous groups.<sup>14</sup>

While Correa inserted Indigenous methodologies within the Constitution, it should be noted that there have been misgivings in the practical application of these ideals within the new Constitution. While significant advances have transpired within Ecuador to address poverty and inequality, the nation has fallen short of radically restructuring their economies in line with the ecological principles of *Buen Vivir* and the *Rights of Nature*.<sup>15</sup> This may be due to Corerra relying heavily on traditional development strategies of income derived from nature resource exploitation to fund the social programs that have been key to lifting their citizens out of poverty. Under Correa's administration, mining and agribusiness sectors thrived with the proportion of exports represented by raw materials increasing from 74.3% in 2007 to 83% in 2014.<sup>16</sup>

In particular, the rollback of the commitment not to drill for oil in Yasuni National park and crackdowns on Indigenous and environmental groups, cast doubt on the Ecuadorian Government's commitment to the principles enshrined in the constitution.<sup>17</sup> The Ecuadorian National Plan of 2013-17 began by stating "*Buen Vivir is our horizon*," however, it should be

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<sup>13</sup> Rapid Transition Alliance. "The Rights of Nature in Bolivia and Ecuador." Rapid Transition Stories, <https://www.rapidtransition.org/stories/the-rights-of-nature-in-bolivia-and-ecuador/>

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Rapid Transition Alliance. "The Rights of Nature in Bolivia and Ecuador." Rapid Transition Stories, <https://www.rapidtransition.org/stories/the-rights-of-nature-in-bolivia-and-ecuador/>

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*





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noted that advocates and supporters argue that this remains to be the case, although the road may be uneven, and there is still a long way to go.<sup>18</sup>

### Environmental Justice

Efforts to include Indigenous peoples and the protection of their rights, lands, and their cultural practices and beliefs must use the methodologies inherent to environmental justice. The movement for environmental justice is often thought of as a response to environmental racism. Environmental racism is the institutional, disproportionate impact of climate hazards on people of color. The concept was initially used in debates surrounding the intentional placement of polluting industries in areas where vulnerable people – usually Black, Indigenous, and people of color – live. Delegates should be aware of two mechanisms inherent to environmental justice, procedural justice and distributive justice:

- Procedural justice investigates the imbalance of power between communities with unequal economic development;<sup>19</sup> often, procedural justice focuses on *who* is participating in (or able to participate in) the decision making process apropos environmental policies.
- Distributive justice “is concerned with the inequitable distribution of burdens.”<sup>20</sup> Here, burdens refers to the balance between access to environmental goods (e.g., clean water, clean air) and environmental bads (e.g., polluted water, runoff).

Using the two mechanisms of environmental justice, delegates can see the ways in which Indigenous communities are left out of decision making processes (procedural) while typically shouldering an unequal environmental burden (distributive justice). The goal of environmental justice is to ensure that historically-marginalized communities are brought into the decision-making process, while also balancing the distribution of environmental burdens across different groups (i.e., to ensure that one group does not shoulder the entirety of an environmental bad).

There is, however, a tendency to reduce Indigenous communities and populations into a greater, monolithic group that does not account for the inherent cultural and environmental diversity within and between each community. That is why delegates should be familiar with and use an intersectional analysis during committee. Intersectionality, as it was coined by American civil rights advocate and racial scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, describes how different aspects of a person’s identity combine to shape experiences and create either opportunity for discrimination or privilege.<sup>21</sup> These aspects can include gender, age, race, class, sexuality, religion, disability,

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Environmental Programme. “Neglected: Environmental Justice Impacts of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution.” 13: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/35417/EJIPP.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> UNEP. “Neglected.” 13

<sup>21</sup> Katy Steinmetz. “She Coined the Term ‘Intersectionality’ Over 30 Years Ago. Here’s What It Means to Her Today”. Time. February 20, 2020. <https://time.com/5786710/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality/>





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and physical appearance. It is not enough to understand that some groups are disproportionately affected by climate change because they are a certain race or class. The unique intersection of an individual's identity across multiple aspects allows for an understanding of their unique experience of environmental injustice, i.e., additionally consider what is their disability status, their gender expression, their type of housing, etc. and how this may affect their ability for employment in new energy sectors, their risk of violence in climate-exacerbated conflict, and their access to clean and affordable healthcare.<sup>22</sup>

In the view of the United Nations, delegates should be specially concerned with the inclusion of diverse stakeholders in the environmental movement and decision-making process. In a report by the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur stated that climate justice cannot be achieved without social justice and the acknowledgment of systematic racism and colonial legacies.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, a bilateral effort involving both the nation-state and private transnational corporations is necessary in order to positively and meaningfully achieve environmental justice.

### **Inclusion of Indigenous Voices in Policymaking**

Inclusion of Indigenous peoples in policymaking is essential to ensuring that their voices are heard and that their perspectives and needs are considered. Policymaking that fails to consider the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous peoples is likely to perpetuate existing inequalities and perpetuate harmful policies that have negative impacts on Indigenous communities.

Moreover, Indigenous peoples have a wealth of knowledge and expertise that can be invaluable in addressing some of the world's most pressing issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainable development. By including Indigenous peoples in policymaking, governments and other stakeholders can tap into this wealth of knowledge and expertise and develop more effective and inclusive policies that benefit both Indigenous peoples and society as a whole. Despite the clear benefits of Indigenous inclusion in policy making, there are several challenges and barriers that prevent this from happening in practice. Some of these include:

*Lack of recognition of Indigenous peoples and their rights:* Many countries do not formally recognize Indigenous peoples or their rights, making it difficult for them to participate in policymaking processes and have their perspectives heard, especially Indigenous women and girls - who face additional forms of discrimination and vulnerability. According to UNCEB, Indigenous women and girls are “three times more likely to experience sexual violence

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<sup>22</sup> See UNWomen Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit at <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Intersectionality-resource-guide-and-toolkit-en.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. “The global climate crisis is a racial justice crisis.” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/11/global-climate-crisis-racial-justice-crisis-un-expert>



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compared with non-Indigenous women... are particularly affected by large-scale land-grabbing and dispossession because of their unequal access to and control over land, territories and natural resources.”<sup>24</sup>

*Structural barriers:* Indigenous peoples may face systemic barriers that prevent them from participating in policy making, including limited access to education. In addition, Indigenous women and girls are also disproportionately affected by poverty, and lack of access to social protection - Indigenous children and youth experience also experience higher rates of suicide and self-harm compared with non-Indigenous peoples.

*Power imbalances:* Indigenous peoples often face power imbalances that prevent them from having an equal say in policymaking. This can be due to political, economic, and social factors, including conflicts involving Indigenous peoples over land, territories, and resources. According to UNSCEB, attacks on defenders of the human rights of Indigenous peoples for defending their collective rights to lands, territories, and resources, which include Indigenous environmental human rights defenders, have increased dramatically in recent years. The continued conflicts and human rights violations related to their lands often also result in the displacement and dispossession of Indigenous peoples and, in some instances, a heightened risk of statelessness, particularly for those Indigenous peoples whose traditional lands cross national borders.<sup>25</sup>

While the rights of Indigenous peoples have been given progressively more attention by the United Nations system, from the establishment of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1982 to the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 2007, as well as the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples of 2014, the implementation of these international legal instruments and United Nations frameworks has been disproportionate.

Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous children, youth, girls and women, elders, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, continue to face widespread discrimination and marginalization. Respect for Indigenous peoples’ rights must go hand in hand with their meaningful participation, inclusion and empowerment to make informed decisions, as full and equal members of society. Indigenous peoples are indispensable partners and contributors to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and delegates must consider how Indigenous people can become more inclusive to the policymaking process.

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<sup>24</sup> United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (UNSCEB). "Call to Action on Building an Inclusive, Sustainable, and Resilient Future with Indigenous Peoples." UNSCEB, January 2021, <https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/CEB-Call-to-Action-Indigenous-2020-WEB%20%281%29.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*



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It is imperative to enact change. Indigenous voices contain a holistic world view and traditional knowledge, passed down intergenerationally, to become included in the formal processes that lead the protection of biodiversity and the fight against climate change.<sup>26</sup>

### Conclusion

While the UN has made previous efforts to promote and protect the rights of Indigenous peoples and their unique relations with the environment, the member states and the UN have repeatedly failed to deliver on their commitments to protect these rights. Delegates to the UNEP should consider the following when developing potential resolutions:

- **Inadequate implementation of past international agreements:** As you may know, the UN has adopted a variety of international agreements related to Indigenous peoples and the environment, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), but the implementation has been slow, and uneven - many countries who committed and voted in favor of this agreement have failed to fully protect and respect the rights of Indigenous peoples.
- **Lack of meaningful engagement and participation:** Indigenous peoples face barriers to even have a meaningful engagement and participation in the decision-making processes that impact their lands, territories, and cultural foundation. UN member states have failed at not addressing these barriers and empowering Indigenous peoples within their own member state to assert their own rights.
- **Inadequate protection against violations:** Indigenous peoples and their environments are often at risk and threatened by land grabbing, resource extraction, and displacement. Member states are not doing enough to prevent and address these violations, and hold perpetrators accountable to their actions.
- **Insufficient funding and support:** Indigenous peoples face challenges to secure appropriate and adequate funding support for their initiatives to protect their rights and environments. Delegates should consider ways to address this problem.

In conclusion, the rights of Indigenous peoples and the environment are closely intertwined. Indigenous communities hold a vast array of knowledge, cultural and symbolic ties, and unique relations with the land that they occupy - that can also assist in the preservation of biodiversity and combating climate change.

These communities, however, face challenges in asserting their rights to protect and maintain occupancy in these lands - and delegates to UNEP are tasked with promoting and protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples and the environment. Delegates should consider

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<sup>26</sup> United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (UNSCEB). "Call to Action on Building an Inclusive, Sustainable, and Resilient Future with Indigenous Peoples." UNSCEB, January 2021, <https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/CEB-Call-to-Action-Indigenous-2020-WEB%20%281%29.pdf>



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existing international agreements, such as UNDRIP, and the support of initiatives that empower Indigenous communities, particularly women and young children within those communities, to assert their rights and participate in decision-making processes related to the use and management of their land and resources.



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### **RESOURCE REVIEW**

#### **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP):**

Adopted in 2007 by the General Assembly, this declaration establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous peoples of the world and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of Indigenous peoples.

#### **The International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries:**

Adopted in 1989, this convention recognizes the rights of Indigenous peoples to participate in decisions affecting their lands, resources, and cultures, and outlines obligations of states to ensure that such rights are respected.

#### **The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):**

Adopted in 1992, this international treaty sets out the principles for global cooperation to address climate change and provides a framework for negotiating specific commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

#### **The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 8 (j) (CBD):**

Adopted in 1992, this international treaty recognizes the importance of conserving biodiversity and the vital role that Indigenous peoples play in protecting the world's ecosystems and species.

#### **The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII):**

This intergovernmental body was established in 2000 to serve as a high-level platform for the discussion of Indigenous issues.

#### **The United Nations Environment Programme Environmental Justice Report:**

This report focuses on the impacts of plastic pollution and other marine litter through an environmental justice paradigm. Delegates will find the most use from pages 10-15 of the report.

### **Guiding Questions**

1. What role have Indigenous peoples played in conserving biodiversity and protecting ecosystems within your country?
2. In what ways have colonization and the exploitation of natural resources disrupted relationships between Indigenous peoples and the government within your country?
3. How have government policies and resource extraction industries impacted the lands and cultures of Indigenous peoples within your country?



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4. What efforts are being made by your delegation to recognize and protect the rights of Indigenous peoples to their ancestral lands and resources? How can your delegation improve on this?
5. How are proposed resolutions accounting for environmental justice? Who is being included and excluded from the decision-making process? How are environmental and economic burdens being distributed across population groups?
6. In what ways will the committee address the intersectionality of Indigenous identity in order to address environmental concerns?