



IPMG

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

MAJOR GROUP TO UNEP

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DECLARATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY – UNEA-7

Recognition, Respect, Promotion and Protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Sciences, and Practices as Key Solutions for a Resilient Planet

Whereas we, Indigenous Peoples of the seven socio-cultural regions, gathered for the Seventh Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) held in Nairobi from 8-12 December 2025, first acknowledge the Indigenous Peoples of these lands and territories,

Reaffirming our inherent rights as recognized in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), treaties, agreements, and other constructive arrangements with states,

Affirming that our knowledge systems, sciences, and practices are vital to the survival and resilience of the planet,


Recognizing that all life is interconnected and that the breath of the Earth is our own,


Understanding our inherent rights to protect these connections, honoring the wisdom carried by our ancestors through our knowledge systems, sciences, and practices. Our connection to the natural world is a living relationship grounded in respect, reciprocity, and responsibility,

Concerned that international governance continues to enable mechanisms that favor capitalism, consumerism, extractivism, and colonialism over an equitable, safe, and healthy environment for all beings,

Calling upon all Member States, United Nations entities, and partners to ensure that environmental governance fully recognizes, respects, protects, and upholds our individual and collective rights, responsibilities, knowledge systems, sciences, practices, and contributions as rights holders,

Recalling that Articles 18, 19, 25, and 32 of UNDRIP guarantee Indigenous Peoples' full and effective participation in decision-making, our capacity to give or withhold Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and to determine our own priorities for the development, conservation, or common use of our lands, waters, and territories, while assuring cultural, political and spiritual relationships with our lands and waters.





Emphasizing that the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution are deeply interconnected, and that environmental degradation constitutes a violation of human rights. These crises require not only technical solutions but also the vital contributions of the knowledge systems, sciences, and practices of Indigenous Peoples in contemporary environmental stewardship for respectful and regenerative relationships with the natural world and the full recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination as essential pathways to planetary healing and wellbeing.

Upholding the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Environmental Governance


UNEA-7 must ensure that all resolutions and programmes of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) rigorously uphold UNDRIP. This includes establishing and mandating institutionalized mechanisms that guarantee the full, effective, and direct participation of Indigenous Peoples from design, negotiation, and decision-making to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Such mechanisms must integrate the principles of FPIC as a foundational standard and provide adequate capacity-building support to ensure Indigenous Peoples can participate fully and equitably.

We urge the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and UNEP to take immediate and concrete action and call for:

1. Formal representation of Indigenous Peoples within all UNEA and UNEP decision-making bodies, including the Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution, ensuring direct participation, autonomy, and authority in shaping environmental policy.
2. Establishment of a permanent Indigenous Peoples' advisory mechanism under UNEP to guarantee genuine co-decision processes upholding the right of FPIC, with full recognition of the knowledge systems, sciences and practices of Indigenous Peoples going beyond consultation toward shared governance, and Indigenous-led governance.
3. Integration of Indigenous environmental justice and anti-colonial approaches that recognize and uplift Indigenous governance, legal systems, and worldviews, as essential frameworks for environmental policy, programme design, and implementation, ensuring these knowledge systems, sciences, and practices are respected and operationalized alongside existing structures.

Recognition of the Knowledge Systems, Sciences, and Practices of Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems, sciences, and practices are grounded in millennia of experimentation, observation of natural phenomena, and lived relationships with the natural world, rooted in principles of reciprocity. These are evolving, comprehensive, robust, and empirical systems of knowledge essential for addressing environmental crises.



We call upon UNEA and Member States to:

1. Embed Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems, sciences, and practices into environmental monitoring, indicators, and early-warning systems, while ensuring the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples as knowledge holders and decision-makers.
2. Support Indigenous-led research, community-based monitoring, and reporting in biodiversity conservation, climate action, water governance, and pollution mitigation to strengthen both local and international resilience.
3. Guarantee the protection of data sovereignty, intellectual property rights, and the right of FPIC, in any process involving the use, sharing, or documentation of Indigenous Knowledge. Support the protection and revitalization of Indigenous languages, which are living repositories of ecological knowledge and essential to sustaining the world's biodiversity and climate resilience.

Advancing Holistic Indigenous-led Solutions

We categorically reject false solutions that perpetuate harm and do not address the root cause of ecological issues, including carbon offsets, geoengineering, debt swaps, and so called nature based solutions, that appropriate Indigenous knowledge systems, erode Indigenous Peoples' self-determination, threaten livelihoods, enable and facilitate land dispossession, and commodify nature under new mechanisms that reinforce extractivism and exploitation.

We call for:

1. A complete phaseout of fossil fuels, toxic chemicals, and plastics across their entire life cycles, from extraction to production, use, and disposal, prioritizing the health, rights, and well-being of Indigenous Peoples' and all communities.
2. Recognition and support for Indigenous-led circular and regenerative economies and food systems founded on principles of non-toxicity, reciprocity, and sustainability as living examples of just and enduring environmental solutions.
3. Robust social, environmental and cultural safeguards for all emerging technologies to prevent new forms of extraction, pollution, and exploitation, ensuring justice for both people and the planet

Indigenous Peoples' Rights, Environmental Integrity, and Protection of Defenders

Environmental degradation, pollution, and land dispossession and degradation are violations of the rights of Indigenous Peoples to health, life, culture, and self-determination. Furthermore, Indigenous Peoples are frequently subjected to attacks, criminalization, forced displacements, violence, and abuse. Protecting the environment and protecting Indigenous Peoples' rights are inseparable.

We urge UNEA-7 and UNEP to:

1. Anchor all environmental policies and actions in a rights-based approach, guided by UNDRIP, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other relevant international human rights instruments.
2. Affirm and recognize that protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples, both in law and practice, is fundamental to protecting the planet and collective health, ensuring that environmental governance recognizes and safeguards Indigenous Peoples' self-determination, stewardship, and decision-making authority.
3. Strengthen UN mechanisms dedicated to the recognition and protection of Indigenous land, water, and environmental defenders, including clear pathways for effective accountability and access to justice in cases of violence, displacement, and criminalization; with mechanisms to hold accountable the perpetrators from extractive industries and private interests.

Implementation, Accountability, and Financing

We insist that commitments must be translated into concrete, measurable and enforceable action.

We call for:

1. Direct access to environmental financing and climate funds for Indigenous Peoples from all seven socio-cultural regions, enabling self-determined initiatives without intermediary gatekeeping.
2. Establishment of effective and transparent accountability frameworks for Member States, corporations, business, industry, and financial institutions, ensuring compliance with UNDRIP and safeguards on human rights and environmental protection through enforceable mechanisms at local, national, regional, and international levels.
3. Integration of gender, youth, and intergenerational equity into all Indigenous Peoples' participation mechanisms at local, national, regional, and international levels.
4. Regular reporting by UNEP on progress toward the protection and implementation of Indigenous Peoples' rights in all UNEA outcomes, including clear indicators and measurable progress.
5. Implementation of a dedicated budget line with direct funding allocated to Indigenous Peoples' organizations and projects, including programme development and design from inception, ensuring that Indigenous Peoples' self-determination, needs, priorities, and governance systems are supported.

6. We also call on UNEA to move beyond acknowledgment of Indigenous Peoples and their rights, toward shared governance and shared responsibility. This ensures that future generations inherit a world where the sacred balance of life is restored and protected.

Let this declaration stand as a living commitment to co-create a non-toxic, just, equitable, and regenerative future, rooted in respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights, knowledge, and their responsibility as the Earth's original stewards.

Adopted by Indigenous Peoples gathered at UNEA-7, 8 December 2025, Nairobi, Kenya

Presented to the UNEA-7 Presidency and UNEP Executive Director – 8 December 2025, Nairobi, Kenya

