

Highlights from the 24th Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues by the UN-NGO Office

>>> April 2025



The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) is a key platform dedicated to addressing matters concerning Indigenous Peoples globally. Its 24th session was convened from April 21 to May 2, 2025, at the UN Headquarters in New York City. The event was marked by the attendance of high-ranking dignitaries, including the UN Secretary-General. Representing the Society of the Sacred Heart were; Margaret Mwarili, UN-NGO Representative and Apolline Bouts, an intern affiliated with the UN-NGO office.



The intern and UN-NGO representative attending the opening of the forum

The special theme of the UNPFII was: **"Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples within United Nations Member States and the United Nations system, including identifying good practices and addressing challenges,"**



UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, speaking at the opening ceremony of the UNPFII

Throughout the forum, discussions were energized by a dynamic blend of interregional and intergenerational perspectives, bringing a truly global dialogue to the forefront. More than 100 side and parallel events further deepened the conversations. For the first time, the forum hosted a high-level discussion centred on the rights of Indigenous women.

Some key calls to action included:

- Recognising Indigenous women as pivotal voices in decision-making processes
- Ensuring equitable access to education for Indigenous communities
- Preserving Indigenous languages, cultural heritage and historical narratives
- Protecting Indigenous lands and territories.
- Confronting the criminalisation of Indigenous defenders and safeguarding their territories and ecosystems



Parallel event: Conversation with Indigenous leaders about the impact of extractivism on Indigenous people.



Side event about moving reconciliation forward and Indigenous women's leadership in national advocacy & community action



Side event about Indigenous-led protocols on Free, Prior and Informed Consent: advancing the rights to self-determination and self-government

A resounding message echoed throughout the forum:
The rights and dignity of Indigenous Peoples are non-negotiable!!!!



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>>> Challenges

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However, the forum lacked the presence and/or active participation of various governments that have indigenous people in their territories. Such absence calls for dialogue to encourage active participation of national governments in global discussions.

The indigenous peoples reported challenges they experienced in accessing the forum venue in New York. In fact, various indigenous leaders and representatives experienced increased visa struggles and denials due to the current political climate in the United States. It is also important to emphasise that the costs of coming to New York and the potential backlash faced by indigenous people's governments may prevent Indigenous leaders from attending future forums.

>>> Achievements



Parallel Event: Conversation between Indigenous leaders about their achievements & struggles

- Constitutional recognition of indigenous identity and rights in some countries
- Inclusion of Indigenous peoples in national and local decision-making processes
- Successful granting of various Indigenous land claims in some nations

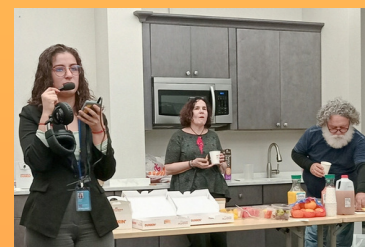


Side event: "Land Rights, Land Activation and Economic Development"



Indigenous youth leader at a global dialogue on the rights of Indigenous women

Furthermore, the presence of the Indigenous Peoples and the presentations made at the forum were inspiring for their strength and outspoken activism—particularly the active participation of **Indigenous youth** and the broad representation of Indigenous communities from all continents.



The UN-NGO Intern interpreting at a parallel event

Concluding on May 2, 2025, the 24th session of the UNPFII, rich in knowledge and rooted in the reality of the indigenous people's lives, left participants inspired and firmly committed to advocacy for indigenous people's rights. The forum fostered a renewed sense of purpose and reverence for indigenous peoples' ancestral knowledge and wisdom. It elevated global understanding and appreciation for the resilience of indigenous communities.



Closing ceremony of the forum

