



AMMA'S MESSAGE

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE – 9 AUGUST

Leaving no one behind Indigenous peoples and the call for a new social contract

There are over 476 million indigenous peoples living in 90 countries across the world, accounting for 6.2 per cent of the global population. Indigenous peoples are the holders of a vast diversity of unique cultures, traditions, languages and knowledge systems. They have a special relationship with their lands and hold diverse concepts of development based on their own worldviews and priorities.

Although numerous indigenous peoples worldwide are self-governing and some have been successful in establishing autonomy in varying forms, many indigenous peoples still come under the ultimate authority of central governments who exercise control over their lands, territories and resources. Despite that reality, indigenous peoples have demonstrated extraordinary examples of good governance, ranging from the Haudenosaunee to the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated many existing inequalities, disproportionately affecting populations all over the world that were already suffering from poverty, illness, discrimination, institutional instability or financial insecurity. From the perspective of indigenous peoples, the contrast is even starker. In many of our societies, the social contract, at the very least, needs some revision.



2021 Virtual Commemoration

9 August 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. EDT

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will organize a virtual commemoration for speakers to discuss redesigning a new social contract for indigenous peoples, where their own forms of governance and ways of life must be respected and based on their free, prior and informed consent.

What is a social contract?

This August 9, International Day of Indigenous Peoples, we must demand indigenous peoples' inclusion, participation and approval in the constitution of a system with social and economic benefits for all.

That is why the 2021 theme is ““Leaving no one behind: Indigenous peoples and the call for a new social contract.” But, what does it mean?

A social contract is an unwritten agreement that societies make to cooperate for social and economic benefits. In many countries, where indigenous peoples were driven from their lands, their cultures and languages denigrated and their people marginalized from political and economic activities, they were never included in the social contract to begin with. The social contract was made among the dominant populations.





Over recent years and decades, various societies have sought to address this, including through apologies, truth and reconciliation efforts, legislative reforms, as well as constitutional reforms, while at the international level, these efforts have included the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and advisory bodies such as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Despite the existence of international instruments to respond these inequalities, not all are embarked on the collective journey to ensure that no one is left behind, including indigenous peoples. Therefore, the building and redesigning of a new social contract as an expression of cooperation for social interest and common good for humanity and nature, is needed.

The new social contract must be based on genuine participation and partnership that fosters equal opportunities and respects the rights, dignity and freedoms of all. Indigenous peoples' right to participate in decision-making is a key component in achieving reconciliation between indigenous peoples and States.

Did you know?

- More than 86% of indigenous peoples globally work in the informal economy, compared to 66% for their non-indigenous counterparts
- Indigenous peoples are nearly three times as likely to be living in extreme poverty compared to their non-indigenous counterparts.
- Globally, 47% of all indigenous peoples in employment have no education, compared to 17% of their non-indigenous counterparts. This gap is even wider for women

Who are the indigenous and tribal peoples?

Indigenous and tribal peoples have their own cultures, languages, customs and institutions, which distinguish them from other parts of the societies in which they find themselves.

There is no universal definition of indigenous and tribal peoples, but International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 takes a practical approach to the issue and provides



objective and subjective criteria for identifying the peoples concerned (see Article 1 of the Convention). These criteria can be summarized as:

	Subjective criteria	Objective criteria
Indigenous peoples	Self-identification as belonging to an indigenous people	<p>Descent from populations, who inhabited the country or geographical region at the time of conquest, colonization or establishment of present state boundaries.</p> <p>They retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, irrespective of their legal status.</p>
Tribal peoples	Self-identification as belonging to a tribal people	<p>Their social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community.</p> <p>Their status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations.</p>

Indigenous and tribal peoples are often known by national terms such as native peoples, aboriginal peoples, first nations, adivasi, janajati, hunter-gatherers, or hill tribes. Given the diversity of peoples it aims at protecting, the Convention uses the inclusive terminology of “indigenous and tribal peoples” and ascribes the same set of rights to both groups. In Latin America, for example, the term “tribal” has been applied to certain afro-descendent communities.

The ILO has been engaged with indigenous and tribal peoples’ issues since the 1920s. It is responsible for the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) , the only international treaty open for ratification that deals exclusively with the rights of these peoples. The ILO’s Decent Work Agenda , with gender equality and non-discrimination as a cross-cutting concern, serves as a framework for indigenous and tribal peoples’



empowerment. Access to decent work enables indigenous women and men to harness their potential as change agents in poverty reduction, sustainable development and climate change action. But, far too often, they continue to face discrimination and their voices continue to go unheard.

Indigenous peoples have been dispossessed of their lands, territories and resources over centuries, and as a result, have often lost control over their way of life. Worldwide, they account for 6 per cent of the population, but represent more than 18 per cent of those living in extreme poverty.

Invaluable knowledge for a changing planet

Indigenous peoples have a special role to play in the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources. Their in-depth, varied and locally rooted knowledge can help the world adapt to, and mitigate, the consequences of climate change.

Indigenous peoples have unique food systems anchored in sustainable livelihood practices, which are adapted to the specific ecosystems of their territories.

Women, in particular, are full of untapped potential as stewards of natural resources and biodiversity. They are guardians of cultural diversity and peace brokers in conflict resolution.

At a community level and on the world stage

In line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and particularly its pledge to “leave no one behind”, the International Food and Agricultural Department (IFAD) supports indigenous peoples’ self-driven development through projects that strengthen their culture, identity, knowledge, natural resources, intellectual property and human rights.

Since 2007, the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF) has provided small grants of up to US\$50,000 for these projects, which improve the quality of life of indigenous peoples and stimulate economic development.



In 2009, IFAD's Executive Board approved the Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples. It aims to enhance IFAD's development effectiveness with indigenous peoples' communities in rural areas, and to empower them to overcome poverty by building upon their identity and culture.

To convert policy commitments into action, IFAD has established an Indigenous Peoples' Forum, promoting dialogue and consultation among indigenous peoples' organizations and institutions, IFAD staff and Member States.

The Forum has helped to set the strategic direction for IFAD's engagement with indigenous peoples, which translates into the economic empowerment of indigenous peoples, especially women and youth.

Whether it is preserving cultural heritage, or ensuring indigenous communities have free, prior and informed consent to development projects, IFAD is guided by principles that promote indigenous knowledge and community-driven development in all our country strategies and policy dialogues, and throughout the project cycle.

Through the creation of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum and IPAF, strong partnerships, built on trust, have been established between IFAD and indigenous peoples' organizations, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and other like-minded organizations that support indigenous peoples.



UNESCO policy on engaging with indigenous peoples

UNESCO has broad mandates in the fields of education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, and communication and information. Its policies, programmes and projects provide opportunities and have significant impacts (positive and negative) for indigenous peoples worldwide.

The 2030 Agenda commitment to ‘Leave no one behind’ brings new impetus to ensure that indigenous peoples’ priorities are heard. Following the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the UN General Assembly in September 2007, and the UN Development Group (UNDG) Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples’ Issues issued in 2008, it is increasingly important that UN agencies, including UNESCO, consider how to provide guidance on engaging with indigenous peoples. In this light, the UNESCO policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples seeks to outline a house-wide approach that will guide all of UNESCO’s programme sectors in their interactions with indigenous peoples and their organizations.

