

12th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



Panel discussion on Indigenous Women in Power

Concept note

- Date and venue:** **Wednesday 17 July 2019, 10h00-13h00, Palais des Nations, Room XX, Geneva**
(will be broadcast live and archived on <http://webtv.un.org>)
- Objectives:** The panel discussion aims:
- To discuss the motivation behind indigenous women pursuing a political career in mainstream politics: how was their journey and how did they get there?
 - To share experiences in their current positions and describe what it means to them to be indigenous women in national parliament or government
 - To examine the challenges and barriers to indigenous women's participation in mainstream politics, including issues relating to indigenous peoples
 - To discuss how the UN and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples can support indigenous women in office in their political role
- Moderator:** **Carolyn Rodrigues Birkett, Director of the FAO Liaison Office in Geneva**
- Panellists:**
- **Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew, PC (former Member of Parliament and Minister, Canada)**
 - **Jannie Lasimbang (Assistant Minister of Law and Native Affairs, Sabah State, Malaysia)**
 - **Sara Olsvig (Former Member of Parliament, Greenland/Denmark)**
 - **Anna Otke (Member of the Federation Council, Russian Federation)**
 - **Zakiyatou Oualett Halatine (Former Minister, Mali)**
 - **Joenia Wapichana (Federal Deputy, Brazil)**
- Outcome:** A summary of the discussion will be included in the annual report of the Expert Mechanism to the Human Rights Council.
- Format:** The duration of the panel discussion will be limited to three hours. A maximum of one hour and a half will be set aside for the panellists, including the opening statement, moderator comments, panellist presentations, and their responses to questions and concluding remarks.
- Expert Mechanism members and observers (States, indigenous peoples, NHRIs and NGOs) intervening from the floor will also have a maximum of one hour and a half in total. Observers will have a maximum of two minutes to raise issues and ask questions specific to the aims of the panel. The list of speakers for the discussion will be established at the beginning of the panel.
- Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese,

English, French, Russian and Spanish).

Accessibility for persons with disabilities:

As with the rest of the EMRIP session, the panel will be made fully accessible. During the panel, international sign interpretation and real-time captioning will be provided and webcasted. In Room XX, four seats are reserved for participants using wheelchairs, in the seventh (last) row. Oral statements may be embossed in Braille from any of the six official languages of the United Nations, upon request and following the procedure described in the “Accessibility guide to the Human Rights Council for persons with disabilities” (available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/Accessibility.aspx>).

Background:

The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) was established by the Human Rights Council, the UN’s main human rights body, in 2007 under resolution 6/36 as a subsidiary body of the Council. Its mandate was then amended in September 2016 by Human Rights Council resolution 33/25. The Expert Mechanism provides the Human Rights Council with expertise and advice on the rights of indigenous peoples as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and assists Member States, upon request, in achieving the ends of the Declaration through the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the rights of indigenous peoples.

The Expert Mechanism will be devoting half a day during its 12th session to examine the issue of indigenous women’s political participation through this half-day panel. This theme is firmly grounded in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and highlights the transformative role that indigenous women can play when they reach positions of power.

Article 5 enshrines indigenous peoples’ right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, but also states that indigenous peoples should retain their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State. This panel will focus on indigenous women in mainstream politics as opposed to those who represent indigenous peoples in their own self-governing systems where they exist.

States reaffirmed their commitment to indigenous peoples’ rights during the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. In paragraph 17 of the Conference’s Outcome Document, States committed themselves to supporting the empowerment of indigenous women and to support measures to ensure their full and effective participation in decision-making at all levels.

This theme also has strong links with Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. To give a few examples, Goal 5 on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls is especially relevant, with its target 5.5 relating to women’s full and effective participation at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

Background documents:

- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), General Assembly resolution 61/295 of 13 September 2007
- [General Assembly resolution 70/1](#) of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”
- [Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples](#), General Assembly resolution 69/2 of 22 September 2014.
- [Beyond numbers: The participation of indigenous peoples in parliament](#), Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014.