



## **United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

### **Virtual Regional Meetings**

#### **“The impact of COVID-19 on the rights of indigenous peoples under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”**

*30 November to 3 December 2020*

#### ***Concept Note***

##### **Background**

1. Established by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2007, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a subsidiary body composed of seven independent members that provides the 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. The seven members serve in their individual capacities.
2. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the 13th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, initially scheduled to take place from 8 to 12 June 2020, was postponed to take place from 30 November to 4 December. As an exceptional measure, to ensure that the Expert Mechanism's reports and suggestions were ready for submission to the Human Rights Council's 45<sup>th</sup> Session in September 2020, the Expert Mechanism held a closed virtual pre-session from 22-24 June.<sup>1</sup>
3. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis affecting the travel of members, indigenous peoples, Member States and others, the EMRIP decided to convert its postponed 13<sup>th</sup> session into four virtual regional meetings, followed by a wrap-up meeting for the Expert Mechanism members and Secretariat only. Following advice from conference services on the challenges imposed on ensuring interpretation virtually, and bearing in mind the differing time zones, the Expert Mechanism will hold two-hourly meetings, two regions at a time.
4. The topic of the regional meetings will be, “The impact of COVID-19 on the rights of indigenous peoples under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”. The outcome of these regional meetings will be recorded in the EMRIP's annual report, which will serve as an analytical record of the discussions.

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<sup>1</sup> See here for the outcome of that pre-session.

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/StatementEMRIPPre-sessionJune2020Final.pdf>

5. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, numerous reports, including the recent report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to the General Assembly<sup>2</sup>, and statements and guidance notes<sup>3</sup>, attest to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on indigenous peoples globally. As indicated in its statement at the end of its pre-session in June 2020<sup>4</sup>, the Expert Mechanism is aware of the challenging situation many indigenous peoples are facing, and, in particular, that many do not have the capacity to engage and participate in the work of the UN mechanisms that promote their rights during this crisis. The Expert Mechanism recognises that indigenous peoples are more likely to die of COVID-19, are hit the hardest by its socio-economic consequences, and that inadequate access to health-care and other key facilities exacerbates the possibility of indigenous peoples catching the disease. The Expert Mechanism also observes that certain States are grasping the crisis as an opportunity to undermine rather than protect indigenous rights. Thus, the Expert Mechanism chooses this topic to get a better understanding of the global impact of COVID-19 on indigenous peoples, so that all stakeholders may build back better.

6. The following regional meetings will be held:

- A. Africa and North America** - Monday 30 November from 15:00 to 17:00 (Geneva time). Interpretation in English, and French.
- B. Pacific and Asia** - Tuesday 1 December from 9:00 to 11:00 (Geneva time). Interpretation in English and French.
- C. The Arctic; Central and Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia** - Wednesday 2 December from 15:00 to 17:00 (Geneva time). Interpretation in English, French and Russian.
- D. Central and South America and the Caribbean** - Thursday 3 December from 15:00 to 17:00 (Geneva time). Interpretation in English, French and Spanish.

## Objectives

- Hold an in-depth discussion on the topic to be recorded in EMRIP's annual report.
- Discuss the latest related national and regional developments in the area of policy, law and practice.
- Identify emerging good practices, adopted by indigenous peoples and Member States and challenges from different regions relating to the theme.

## Participants

7. Participation in the regional meetings is open to indigenous peoples, States and other stakeholders. Given the: limited time for each meeting; the challenging virtual nature of these meetings; the inability to hear from indigenous peoples during a normal annual session; and

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<sup>2</sup> A/75/185

<sup>3</sup> For example see OHCHR Guidance Note

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/COVID19Guidance.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 1

concerns expressed about the limited capacity of indigenous peoples to engage with the UN mechanisms during this pandemic; the Expert Mechanism will give priority to indigenous peoples during these regional meetings. **For information on how to participate in the regional meetings, see the Annex attached and/or go to the webpage of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the following link: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/Pages/Session13.aspx>**

8. During the regional meetings, the Expert Mechanism would like to hear from you on the specificities of how indigenous peoples are experiencing life under COVID-19 by responding to the following questions:

- What are the **main challenges** faced by indigenous peoples during the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular with respect to **indigenous people’s health and access to health care**, and the protection of their **land**, territories and resources.
- What has been the role of **traditional practices and medicines** during the pandemic?
- How has COVID-19 affected indigenous people’s **economic, social and cultural life**?
- What is **the particular impact from COVID-19 on indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities**?
- What are some of the **good practices** developed by indigenous peoples and Member States, **specific to indigenous peoples**, in alleviating the negative effects of COVID-19?
- What measures are being taken or could be taken to ensure the protection of indigenous rights in the **recovery stage and aftermath** of COVID-19?
- What do **indigenous peoples need** to help them overcome this crisis?

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## ANNEX

### HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE REGIONAL MEETINGS

You can choose to take part in the regional meetings either by registering as a presenter to get on the speakers list of the meeting on your region or by following the discussion through the webcast.

#### 1. Register as a presenter on the interprefy platform

To register as a presenter at the regional meetings **you must send your statement to the following email address by 6 November 2020:** [expertmechanism@ohchr.org](mailto:expertmechanism@ohchr.org).

The statement **should not exceed 3 mins (4 mins for joint statements)**. Guidance on the content of the statement is provided under paragraph 8 in the Concept Note.

Given the limited amount of time for statements, the number of participants will be limited. Recognising the vulnerable situation many indigenous peoples have been in since the COVID-19 crisis, two-thirds of the statements will come from indigenous peoples, and one-third from Member States.

The Expert Mechanism will decide on the list of speakers on the basis of the following criteria: the content of the statement and its relevance in light of the guidance given in paragraph 8 of the Concept Note; the organisations level of expertise and experience on indigenous issues; the size of the organisation and indigenous peoples represented; and whether the statement is a joint one and thus given preference.

The presenters will receive confirmation of their presence on the speakers list and the modalities of the discussion prior to the regional meeting.

Interpretation will only be provided in the languages stated in paragraph 6 of the Concept Note.

All Statements provided, whether from presenters or others, will be posted on the webpage.

#### 2. Webcast

Anyone can follow the meetings by webcast here: <http://webtv.un.org/>

Those who follow by webcast can participate **by sending questions or comments during the meeting** to the following email address: [emripregmeetings@ohchr.org](mailto:emripregmeetings@ohchr.org)

These comments and questions will be sent to the presenters and members of the Expert Mechanism for discussion during the meeting.

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