

**Call for Inputs: Report to the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly – Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Issues**

**Reply by the International Labour Organization**

The tourism sector is a major driver of economic growth, enterprise development and job creation, particularly for women, youth, migrant workers and local communities. In recent decades, it has experienced continued expansion and diversification to become one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors globally. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism accounted, directly and indirectly, for one in ten jobs worldwide and 10.4 per cent of global GDP. Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) represent the majority share of the industry and its workers. As one of the largest, most dynamic, and in many countries, resilient sectors of the global economy, tourism is known for its ability to overcome crises and downturns.<sup>1</sup>

Indigenous peoples throughout the world face marginalisation and discrimination, from the non-recognition of the rights to their traditional lands, which impairs their opportunity to engage in traditional occupations, to the lack of access to credit. In this context, new forms of community-based activities are crucial as a basis for alternative livelihood strategies. Sustainable tourism, such as ecotourism, that promotes the preservation of the social and natural environment and tourism assets, can play a key role in providing decent work opportunities for indigenous and tribal peoples, while at the same time indigenous and tribal peoples can play an important role in promoting it.

As exemplified by ILO research, community tourism can represent a pathway out of poverty for indigenous peoples. For instance, a small indigenous community in the Guatemalan cloud forest opened the “Hostal Nuboso Maya Pokomchi”, which helped to provide income to ensure food security in the community. In Guatemala, projects like the Hostal Nuboso Maya Pokomchi were made possible thanks to the financial and technical support provided through FENATUCGUA (National Federation of Community Tourism of Guatemala), created in 2004 with ILO support [ETEDPI \(Education in Labour, Employment and the rights of Indigenous Peoples\)](#).<sup>2</sup>

An ILO publication titled, “[Towards a sustainable recovery of employment in the tourism sector in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)”, which carries out an analysis of those employed in the tourism sector in urban and rural areas, explains that while a majority of indigenous peoples live in urban areas in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, many have returned to their rural communities looking for work. In this context, internal tourism could be critical to retake the activities in this sector. Additionally, as expressed by a recent ILO study, the potential of indigenous knowledge has been increasingly recognised beyond traditional subsistence activities, including in ecotourism.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> ILO publication, [The future of work in the tourism sector: Sustainable and safe recovery and decent work in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

<sup>2</sup> ILO, [Community tourism: respecting nature, local culture and indigenous peoples’ rights while on vacation](#).

<sup>3</sup> ILO study, [Traditional Occupations of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Labour Statistics](#).

UN specialized agencies play a key role in ensuring that tourism development respects Indigenous Peoples' rights. The ILO has been very active in ensuring the respect of international labour standard in both law and practice, including through its supervisory mechanisms; in promoting knowledge creation and sharing, and in providing technical support in strengthening capacities and in designing and implementing concrete interventions.

- The ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) has referred to the rights of indigenous peoples and the tourism sector in various of its comments for ILO member States regarding Convention No. 169. For instance, the Committee has issued direct requests addressed to **Panama** in [2022](#), in [2009](#) and in [2005](#); two direct requests addressed to **Guatemala**, one in [2019](#) and another one in [2006](#); four direct requests addressed to **Nicaragua**, in [2018](#), [2017](#), [2016](#), and [2014](#); two observations addressed to **Colombia**, in [2014](#) and [2013](#); a direct request addressed to **El Salvador** in [2014](#) and [2012](#); a [direct request](#) addressed to **Fiji** (2014); a [direct request](#) addressed to **Ecuador** (2015); a [direct request](#) addressed to **Bolivia** (2006); a [direct request](#) addressed to **Argentina** (2005); and three direct requests addressed to **Honduras**, in [2004](#), [2003](#) and [2000](#). All these documents include references to legislation or other measures taken by member States in relation to the issues under discussion.
- The ILO has supported its constituents in developing sound legal and policy frameworks at international and national level as well as in enhancing knowledge creation and sharing. In particular,
  - In April 2022, a technical meeting on COVID-19 and sustainable recovery in the tourism sector adopted [conclusions](#) that note the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on indigenous and tribal peoples;
  - In 2017, a tripartite meeting of experts adopted the [Guidelines on decent work and socially responsible tourism](#), designed to support ILO constituents and other stakeholders engaged in the design and implementation of interventions on the promotion of decent work and full and productive employment in the tourism sector, with a view to enhancing its sustainability and contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. These guidelines highlight the potential of the tourism sector for social and economic development and community inclusion and the need to promoting equality and non-discrimination, including for indigenous peoples. They also specifically refer to ILO Convention No. 169.
  - The ILO is currently finalising a report titled “Panorama de la recuperación laboral postpandemia en el sector turismo de América Latina” and refers to, among other issues, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on indigenous and tribal peoples and the tourism sector.
- The ILO has supported several initiatives, particularly in Latin America and in the Caribbean, aimed at promoting social justice and decent work in community-based tourism by providing trainings and capacity building activities, as well as developing tools, such as the entrepreneurial training programme “Rural Community Tourism and Decent Work (TRC-TD)” to support the creation and development of new tourism enterprises or existing tourism enterprises linked to Rural Community Tourism. Although this training is not specifically directed to indigenous peoples, it addresses main challenges affecting them in the context of rural community tourism. The ILO’s [Start and Improve Your Business Programme](#) (SIYB), contributing to SDG 8, the largest entrepreneurship programme in the world, has contributed to a large number of entrepreneurs to start their own business. In this context, [Celestina Ábalos, an indigenous entrepreneur who owns a tea house in the Quebrada de Humahuaca](#), a UNESCO world heritage site, took part of a virtual SYIB course in October and November 2021. She was provided with tools to scale up her business: how to make a business plan, estimate costs, prepare a budget and inventory, and manage social media.