United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Proposals to be put forward to the 60th session of the Human Rights Council

July 2025

Unedited version

Proposal 1: Human Rights Council panel discussion

1. In accordance with its decision taken at its eighteenth session, the Expert Mechanism proposes that the Human Rights Council hold a panel discussion on recognizing and respecting the rights and values of Indigenous Peoples in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, including sacred places. The Expert Mechanism proposes that *The World Heritage Convention: Indigenous Peoples Rights and Engagement* panel discussion be organized for the sixty-third session of the Council, to be held in September 2026. This proposal is made in recognition of the Outcome Document of the International Expert Workshop on Recognizing and Respecting Indigenous Peoples' Heritage Values in World Heritage Sites.[1]
2. During its eighteenth session, the Expert Mechanism decided that its next annual study will be on the rights of Indigeous Peoples in conflict and post-conflict situations. The study will be complemented by an expert seminar, organized by the Expert Mechanism with the participation of an academic institution and OHCHR, to be held late 2025, and will be informed and enriched by inputs from rights holders and stakeholders solicited through an open call.

Proposal 2: Development of national action plans, legislation, effective monitoring mechanisms and encouraging strengthened role of national human rights institutions (NHRI) and regional human rights bodies in effective implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

3. The Expert Mechanism calls upon the Human Rights Council to continue to encourage more States to develop national action plans, policies, legislation, and independent monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of the Declaration, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples.
4. The Expert Mechanism calls upon the Human Rights Council to persist in its efforts to encourage States and regional human rights bodies to mainstream the Declaration in emerging national and regional human rights policies, including national action plans on business and human rights, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples.
5. The Expert Mechanism welcomes existing collaboration between NHRI and regional human rights bodies and Indigenous Peoples and commends NHRIs with dedicated mandate holders focused upon the protection and promotion of Indigenous Peoples human rights. Where dedicated positions do not exist, the Expert Mechanism calls upon the Human Rights Council to encourage States to empower NHRI and regional human rights bodies to establish such

[1] See https://iipfwh.org/international-expert-workshop-on-recognizing-and-respecting-indigenous-peoples-heritage-values-in-world-heritage-sites/.

positions to oversee implementation, monitoring, and investigation of violations of the Declaration.

6. The Expert Mechanism proposes that the Council encourages States to facilitate capacity building of Indigenous Peoples' institutions and establish cooperation mechanisms with civil society, academia, United Nations country/regional offices, and all levels and departments of Government to advance the implementation of the Declaration in meaningful consultations with Indigenous Peoples.

Proposal 3: Rights of Indigenous Peoples in peace-negotiations, peace agreements and post-conflict situations.

7. Acknowledging the 2024 Human Rights Council preamble (A/HRC/RES/57/15, page 3) and the General Assembly resolution preamble (A/RES/79/159, page 5), the Expert Mechanism recommends to the Council to request the Secretary-General to prepare a report on conflict resolution mechanisms of Indigenous Peoples' and the implementation of peace agreements and with a focus on Indigenous Peoples participation of peacebuilding, transitional justice, and the use of Indigenous approaches to dispute resolution, drawing from relevant United Nations bodies, previous peace processes, and international human rights law, and to present it to the Council at its sixty-fifth session;

Proposal 4: The rights of Indigenous Peoples to data, including data collection and disaggregation

8. The Expert Mechanism calls on the Human Rights Council to encourage States to engage with the Advice in the study on the rights of Indigenous Peoples to data, including with regards to data collection and dissagregation. The Expert Mechanism recommends that the Council encourage States to collect and disaggregate data on Indigenous Peoples with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and with respect for their self-determination and self-governance in the diverse contexts of issues identified by Indigenous Peoples.
9. The Expert Mechanism calls on the Human Rights Council to encourage States to recognize and protect Indigenous data sovereignty through bespoke laws, policies and frameworks. Indigenous data sovereignty requires Indigenous Peoples to be in control of their data on their own terms, according to their own cultural protocols and priorities. There should be an intentional focus on opportunities for creating data infrastructure, technologies and capacities that enable Indigenous Peoples to actively protect and derive benefit from their data, in particular with regard to traditional knowledge and culturally sensitive data.

Proposal 5: Artificial intelligence

10. The Expert Mechanism recognises that without Indigenous specific regulation Artificial Intelligence has the potential to cause irreversible harm to Indigenous Peoples and recommends that the Council encourage States and the private sector to show respect for Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems, adhere to free, prior and informed consent and create spaces for Indigenous Peoples participation in AI development, if they so choose. In this context, States and international organizations should hold accountable those who violate Indigenous Peoples' intellectual property rights, including Artificial Intelligence producers and users.

Proposal 6: Participation of Indigenous Peoples in the Human Rights Council

11. The Expert Mechanism welcomes the Joint report of the co-facilitators and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: Discussions and outcomes of the two

intersessional meetings on concrete ways to enhance the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the work of the Human Rights Council and supports its recommendations. The Expert Mechanism also celebrates Indigenous Peoples taking the floor at the Human Rights Council for the first time as peoples. The Expert Mechanism acknowledges the desire of Indigenous Peoples for clarity on the roadmap and timeline going forward.

12. The Expert Mechanism urges the Council, in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, based on the progress achieved so far and the report recommendations, to continue working towards enhancing the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the work of the Council.
13. The Expert Mechanism urges acceleration of resourcing, facilitating, ensuring, and maximizing participation of Indigenous Peoples political institutions and organizations in all forthcoming dialogues.

Proposal 7: Protection of Indigenous leaders and Indigenous human rights defenders

14. Considering the critical situation that Indigenous leaders and Indigenous human rights defenders continue to face daily worldwide, especially in relation to their rights to self-determination, lands, territories and natural resources, the Expert Mechanism urges the Human Rights Council to call upon States to address corporate and state violations and ensure that Indigenous leaders and Indigenous human rights defenders, without discrimination, are guaranteed a safe living and working environment, security and due protection. This includes public recognition of the key role played by Indigenous leaders and Indigenous human rights defenders, the revision of laws and policies that restrict or criminalize their work, abstention from any act aimed at inhibiting their activities or putting at risk their integrity, and the adoption of appropriate measures to protect them from any form of threat, intimidation, harassment or attack, including online harassment and intimidation.
15. The Expert Mechanism also proposes that the Council request Member States to take accountability for prompt and effective investigation of any violations of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous leaders and Indigenous human rights defenders, including against Indigenous women and Indigenous youth, to ensure effective remedies, including reparations and guarantee the principle of non-repetition in the violation of their rights.

Proposal 8: Reprisals against Indigenous leaders, Indigenous human rights defenders and mandate holders

16. The Expert Mechanism recalls the United Nations's commitment to inclusive, respectful, and safe events, free from intimidation, harassment, or reprisals, as outlined in its Code of Conduct to Prevent Harassment, Including Sexual Harassment, at United Nations System Events. It urges the Human Rights Council to call on States to uphold integrity and respect toward all participants in Expert Mechanism meetings and maintain the highest ethical standards.
17. The Expert Mechanism urges the Council to strongly reaffirm that intimidation or reprisals are unacceptable must stop and must be addressed urgently. It should also condemn such acts against Indigenous leaders, Indigenous human rights defenders, and mandate holders for their participation in or collaboration with the United Nations, including transnational reprisals, and take action to protect their participation.
18. The Expert Mechanism urges the Council to reaffirm concerns and actions from resolutions 51/18 and 54/12, particularly regarding rising reprisals against Indigenous human rights defenders. It calls on the Council to urge States to adopt emergency measures to protect Indigenous leaders and communities, and to address and condemn all reprisals, including those targeting United Nations mandate holders and Indigenous representatives attending Expert Mechanism sessions. It also urges host countries of United Nations meetings to ensure non-discriminatory, timely visa access for Indigenous participants.

Proposal 9: Increased engagement of Member States with the Expert Mechanism

19. The Expert Mechanism urges the Human Rights Council to widely disseminate its technical advisory notes from country engagements, given their universal relevance. It also recommends referencing these notes in the Universal Periodic Review and encouraging Human Rights Treaty Bodies to consider them during State report reviews.
20. The Expert Mechanism urges the Council to draw on lessons from country engagements with Australia in 2023 and Norway in 2024 highlighting effective collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and States, as well as the positive developments in Mexico related to constitutional reform. It recommends States to follow up in good faith and in consultation with Indigenous Peoples on the technical advice related to free, prior and informed consent, child welfare, justice reform and national action plans supporting Indigenous Peoples right of self-determination. The Expert Mechanism further urges States to reform legal frameworks and human rights due diligence to include culturally appropriate and independent expertise, early engagement to avoid cumulative harm, and monitoring mechanisms that reflect Indigenous Peoples' laws and knowledge systems.
21. The Expert Mechanism calls on the Human Rights Council to recognize the successful implementation of its technical advisory notes, which have led to meaningful outcomes such as the reform of the Sami Parliament Act in Finland and the repatriation of the sacred Maaso Kova from Sweden to the Yaqui People.
22. The Expert Mechanism encourages the Council to promote active Member State participation in its work, including contributions to studies and reports, attendance at sessions, making and supporting country engagement requests, and feedback on studies and reports.

Proposal 10: Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the non-self-governing territories

23. The Expert Mechanism welcomes the work of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, established in 1961 by the General Assembly, to review the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.
24. The Expert Mechanism urges the Human Rights Council to call upon Member States to ensure that the rights of Indigenous Peoples within Non-Self-Governing territories or within those waiting to be inscribed on the list are fully recognized and respected, in particular in relation to the right to self-determination and self-government, as affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Proposal 11: International Decade of Indigenous Languages

25. Recalling its 2024 proposals on the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, the Expert Mechanism reiterates the importance of national and local action plans developed in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, grounded in a rights-based approach. Building on its study on data and language rights, the Expert Mechanism calls on the Human Rights Council to support the development of Indigenous language-friendly AI interpretation tools for United Nations sessions, and to promote AI-based language revitalization initiatives with full respect for free, prior and informed consent.
26. The Council should also encourage States and UNESCO to allocate adequate funding to implement the Global Action Plan, including support for Indigenous-led media, language technology, and the use of Indigenous languages in public services.
27. The Expert Mechanism proposes that the Council initiate deliberations toward a Convention on Indigenous Peoples' language rights.

Proposal 12: The rights of Indigenous Peoples to their traditional economies

28. In light of its 2025 report on the rights of Indigenous Peoples to their traditional economies, the Expert Mechanism emphasizes their foundational role in advancing self-determination, food sovereignty, and cultural continuity. These economies, grounded in Indigenous Peoples' governance systems, knowledge, and relationships with land and waters, require legal recognition and protection, including secure tenure and respect for free, prior and informed consent. The Expert Mechanism calls on the Human Rights Council to urge States to remove legal barriers to customary practices such as fishing, hunting, herding, shifting cultivation and small-scale agriculture, and to ensure the equal participation of Indigenous women and youth. It further encourages support for Indigenous-led initiatives in conservation, education, and economic development, and recommends that traditional economies be fully integrated into climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable development frameworks, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples.

Proposal 13: Indigenous Peoples and other ambiguous terms and groups

29. Recalling the previous Expert Mechanism proposal to the Human Right Council on this topic, the 2023 the joint statement by the Expert Mechanism, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Expert Mechanism notes that United Nations documents increasingly conflate the term Indigenous Peoples with the vague term "local communities," despite the distinct rights, histories, and cultures of Indigenous Peoples. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as an international human rights instrument, affirms the distinct collective and individual human rights of Indigenous Peoples and further recognizes that they are equal to all other peoples.
30. The Expert Mechanism urges the Human Rights Council to avoid conflating these terms and calls on States to adopt distinctions-based policies that respect, recognize, and uphold the unique rights of Indigenous Peoples, at all scales.

Proposal 14: Indigenous Child Welfare

31. The Expert Mechanism proposes that the Human Rights Council encourage states to recognize that the pivotal and fundamental right of self-determination should influence, direct and underscore any plan, policy or organisation that addresses the wellbeing of Indigenous children including the disproportionate and alarming rates of detention, self harm and suicide of Indigenous children. The Expert Mechanism urges the Council to ensure that states take all measures to ameliorate these disproportionate incarceration rates for Indigenous children and to meaningfully facilitate the right of self-determination for Indigenous Peoples as a fundamental right.

Proposal 15: Implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

32. The Expert Mechanism proposes that the Human Rights Council take note of the need for progress on the United Nations System Wide Action Plan on the rights of Indigenous Peoples to implement the Declaration, including by stablishing an accountability framework.
33. The Expert Mechanism proposes that the Human Rights Council encourage the continued and increasing use of the Declaration as an interpretive lens in the work of United Nations Treaty Bodies and the Universal Periodic Review.
34. The Expert Mechanism proposes that the President of the Human Rights Council hold a high-level plenary during the Sixty-sixth session of the Council, in 2027, to commemorate the

twentieth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and share perspectives and best practices on the realization of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Proposal 16: Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation and initial contact

35. The Expert Mechanism expresses its concern about the situation of Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation and initial contact and recommends the Council to call for their formal recognition, respect for the principle of no contact and the intangibility of their territories, stressing the need for quality data on these Indigenous Peoples, with full respect of their rights.

Proposal 17: Implementation of the Expert Mechanism mandate in the context of the liquidity crisis

36. The Expert Mechanism regrets the suspension of its mission to Brazil initially planned for September 2025 and encourages Member States to make timely financial contributions to ensure it can fully carry out its work.
37. The Expert Mechanism requests that States address and remove any financial limitations in the context of present or future liquidity crisis that impact on the full and effective exercise of the mandate of the Expert Mechanism, including on its intersessional activities such as country engagement missions, intersessional meetings, coordination with other Indigenous Peoples rights mechanisms and expert seminars. The liquidity crisis should not undermine the participation of Indigenous Peoples in these fora.