

Questionnaire to DPPA-DPO-PBSO on Indigenous issues 2023

Executive summary (500-word limit)

During the period under review, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs remained engaged with the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and its Secretariat, DESA/Indigenous Branch. Regular exchanges with the UNPFII have been instrumental to promote the political rights of Indigenous Peoples and the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in UN political efforts. Regular exchanges with the UNPFII, as well as with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, enhanced DPPA's analysis of conflict trends involving Indigenous Peoples, and strengthened the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in all UN efforts to support political dialogue, mediation and build sustainable peace.

DPPA's work on the promotion of the political rights of Indigenous Peoples included electoral issues. The UN provides electoral assistance upon request from a Member State or a Security Council/General Assembly Resolution. In conducting electoral needs assessment missions, DPPA regularly assesses the challenges and needs of Indigenous Peoples and their political participation. UN assistance, where appropriate and requested, is tailored to those needs. In Guatemala, the UN electoral project (2022-2024) supports the promotion of electoral participation of Indigenous Peoples through voter education, targeted and innovative public outreach strategies, as well as activities aimed at the prevention of political/electoral violence, including against Indigenous Peoples. In other examples, UN electoral assistance projects support efforts to ensure inclusive electoral processes by promoting the political participation of Indigenous Peoples in Ecuador (2023-2025). During the needs assessment mission in Suriname (from 30 October to 3 November), the DPPA-UNDP team met with Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ITP) representatives to incorporate their perspectives in its recommendations.

The work of DPPA contributed to the implementation of the System-Wide Action Plan on Indigenous Peoples, especially through supporting national actors, including from civil society, in advancing the rights, inclusion and participation of Indigenous Peoples in political and peacebuilding processes. The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) works with local communities and civil society organizations, as well as the United Nations system, to support peacebuilding at the local and national levels. In some countries, the PBF supported initiatives specifically designed to enhance the participation of Indigenous Peoples.

A. System-Wide Action Plan to achieve the ends of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

As recommended by the Chairperson of the UNPFII, DPPA, through extra-budgetary resources, launched a pilot project reviewing good practices and lessons-learned of Indigenous conflict resolution efforts and Indigenous governance structures in Andean countries. The project intends to raise awareness about the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and will produce a practice note identifying recommendations to guide DPPA's support of dialogue and mediation initiatives involving Governments and Indigenous Peoples, including strengthening the role of Indigenous women and youth leaders.

In June, the Peacebuilding Commission convened a meeting on Indigenous Peoples, Peace and Reconciliation in Canada, Colombia, and Norway. DPPA supported Member States in providing logistics, technical assistance, and organization for this first-ever meeting. This multi-country engagement allowed the PBC to engage with representatives of Indigenous communities and discuss with Member States that shared their own experiences in addressing Indigenous issues, reconciliation and promoting Indigenous voices. Briefers from the three countries noted the particular discrimination and marginalization faced by Indigenous Peoples, and what can and has been done to reduce violence and ensure inclusive peacebuilding in consideration of Indigenous rights. Participants particularly underscored the importance of seeking truth and remembering the past through transitional justice processes and as part of successful reconciliation. These serve in the interest of preserving and guaranteeing Indigenous socio-cultural, economic, and political rights. Member States further expressed their support for continuing to engage on Indigenous issues.

B. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – achieving SDG 16

During the period under review, DPPA highlights the following country-level initiatives on Indigenous issues and SDG 16.

In Colombia, following a decision of the Security Council informed by recommendations from the Secretary-General, the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia to support peace consolidation expanded to encompass verification of chapters of the historic 2016 Final Peace Agreement that had lagged in their implementation, including provisions to enhance the situation of Afro-Colombian and Indigenous populations. The Mission has strengthened the team supporting the implementation of the Ethnic Chapter, which has been working closely with Indigenous authorities and representatives. In Colombia, the PBF is supporting peacebuilding initiatives in communities prioritized in the 2016 Final Peace Agreement, including Indigenous Peoples affected by violence.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), MONUSCO has continued to promote the participation of women, young people and Indigenous populations in the political processes of the country, including in support of transparent, credible, inclusive, and peaceful elections scheduled for December 2023. MONUSCO, primarily through the efforts of its integrated human rights component, continues to advocate for the implementation of the law on the protection and promotion of Indigenous Peoples – for which the Mission supported the process that led to its adoption in 2022 – as well as for the adoption of the draft law against tribalism, racism and xenophobia. Together with the adoption by the DRC of a law on the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, also in 2022, the DRC has undertaken major legislative steps towards the promotion and protection of minorities' rights, including those of Indigenous Peoples.

In Guatemala, the PBF's Strategic Results Framework included reducing territorial conflicts as a strategic goal, and in 2023 the UNCT continued implementing projects supported by the PBF addressing land conflicts and national peace infrastructures.

In Honduras, in 2023 the PBF approved a project aimed at strengthening national capacities for conflict prevention in rural, Indigenous, and afro descendant territories.

In Chile, DPPA supported the Government in its efforts to seek a solution to the long-standing disputes between the Indigenous Mapuche People and the Chilean State. Expert support, mobilized via the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisors (SBT), included process design support and comparative expertise on the design of Dialogue Commissions.

In Peru, at the request of the RCO Peru and amid escalating nation-wide protests in late 2022/early 2023, a process design expert from SBT engaged in periodic online conversations with members of the UNCT to deepen analysis of the crisis and to explore potential options for the UN to support national stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples organizations, to de-escalate tensions. Points of reflection and exchange included UN support to nascent political dialogue efforts as well as UN engagement with authorities to facilitate the provision of essential services to crisis-affected areas.

In Suriname, DPPA helped establish a policy platform to enhance the coherence of UN assistance to the protection, empowerment, and rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ITP). The regular meetings of the platform – which comprises the Paramaribo RCO, as well as DESA, OHCHR, DPPA and UNDP – have resulted in several concrete offers of support vis-à-vis the Government, such as an offer of assistance to assess the damage of a cyanide spill in a drinking-water reservoir.