

I.P.M.G. STATEMENT – UNEA-6 26/02/2024

Daisy Chepkopus
Indigenous young woman MG UNEP

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

The Indigenous Peoples Major Group extends our warm greetings [Karibu Kenya]

The theme of UNEA 6, "Multilateralism can help tackle the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, pollution and waste," opens the door for Member States to collaborate closely with Indigenous Peoples as partners in finding real solutions to these crises. Despite our history of colonisation, discrimination, and marginalisation, we remain committed to defending nature and safeguarding the environment for both present and future generations.

To address the triple planetary crisis and other associated crises effectively, we call on States to provide and enhance an enabling environment that allows us, Indigenous Peoples, to play an active role and contribute as guardians of nature and as rights and knowledge holders.

Today, we, the Indigenous Peoples, call on Member States to recognise, respect, protect and fulfil our collective rights to our lands, territories, and resources. This includes respecting our free, prior, and informed consent, rights to our cultures and intellectual properties, and right to self-determination as affirmed by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This should serve as the basis for any UNEA resolution that impacts us.

We're concerned that many of the current draft UNEA resolutions overlook our rights as Indigenous Peoples, especially concerning our lands, territories, and resources, which are now heavily polluted and facing increased environmental degradation. We're witnessing land grabs for renewable energy projects and mining of transition minerals without our consent, conservation models displacing our communities, and rising attacks against Indigenous defenders of land, forest, water, and resources. We urge the UNEA to create effective accountability mechanisms for those harming our environment and infringing on our Rights.

We, Indigenous Peoples, have ancient wisdom and knowledge systems that provide sustainable ways of living and solutions for managing resources across generations, enhancing our resilience, and preserving our environment. Our values and practices—solidarity, respect for nature, and collaboration within our communities—have allowed us to live harmoniously with our surroundings. Our knowledge introduces innovative, sustainable methods for maintaining food systems crucial in resolving the triple planetary crises. Our safe, meaningful, informed and inclusive participation in decision-making processes can introduce holistic, sustainable strategies for the mutual benefit of humanity and nature, rather than exploitative practices that serve only a few and disregard the rights of future generations.

We stress the need to distinguish between 'Indigenous Peoples' and 'Local Communities,' and insist that these terms should not be used interchangeably. This, Excellencies, does not mean that local communities do not have rights. They do and their rights must be upheld. But those rights are distinct from the specific rights of Indigenous Peoples under international law tied to the historical and linguistic connections with our lands, territories and resources. We also urge States that have not yet recognize Indigenous Peoples to do so.

We emphasise that Indigenous Peoples and our knowledge systems must be incorporated into policy decisions, initiatives, plans, and projects at all levels on par with scientific knowledge.

In closing, our presence at UNEA aims to foster collaboration and partnership with States and other stakeholders in promoting transformative actions and real solutions that respect and protect our rights and well-being.

Thank you.