



24th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
(April 22, 2025)

AGENDA ITEM 5(g): Thematic dialogue on the financing of Indigenous Peoples' work and participation across the multilateral and regional system

STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS
AND THE NATIVE AMERICAN RIGHTS FUND

Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to present this statement on behalf of the National Congress of American Indians and the Native American Rights Fund.

In its 2023 session report, the Forum urged the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) to ensure the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in its meetings, including the WIPO Diplomatic Conference on Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge held in May 2024. Building on this recommendation, Indigenous representatives successfully advocated for funding from WIPO, securing support for 14 Indigenous participants at the conference. This support enabled the formation of a strong Indigenous Caucus that actively engaged in and meaningfully influenced the negotiations, helping to shape WIPO's first-ever treaty to recognize and include Indigenous Peoples. This achievement clearly demonstrates that even modest investments in Indigenous participation can yield substantial returns, strengthening both the effectiveness and legitimacy of multilateral processes.

Similar progress has been made within the UN Human Rights Council through the establishment of interactive dialogues with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the appointment of an Indigenous co-facilitator for Human Rights Council negotiations. These advances reflect growing recognition of the vital role Indigenous Peoples play in shaping global policy.

To build on this momentum across UN forums, we respectfully urge the Forum to recommend the following:

- (1) that the Human Rights Council ensure adequate funding to support the standing modality of Indigenous Peoples' participation in interactive dialogues with the UN Special Rapporteur and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP);

- (2) that Member States, UN entities, and the private sector provide financial and logistical support for Indigenous Peoples' preparatory processes ahead of the 2027 high-level panel, at the local, regional, and global levels;
- (3) that Member States, UN entities, and the private sector invest in infrastructure necessary to support Indigenous participation in global decision-making processes more broadly. This includes ensuring that the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples and the Indigenous Coordinating Body are adequately resourced and staffed as these mechanisms are essential to sustaining Indigenous Peoples' meaningful engagement across the UN system; and
- (4) that WIPO allocates resources from its regular budget to fund Indigenous participation in its negotiations, particularly as WIPO IGC 51 will mark the third consecutive session where the WIPO Voluntary Fund has been depleted and no Indigenous representatives will receive funding to attend. Sustainable participation cannot depend on uncertain voluntary contributions.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SUGGESTED UNPFII RECOMMENDATION TEXT: The Forum welcomes the steps taken by WIPO to support Indigenous Peoples' participation in the 2024 Diplomatic Conference on Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge, including funding for 14 Indigenous representatives. The Forum emphasizes that such support enabled the formation of a strong Indigenous Caucus, which played a critical role in shaping the first-ever WIPO treaty recognizing Indigenous Peoples. Building on this momentum, the Forum urges: (1) WIPO to allocate consistent and sustainable funding from its regular budget to ensure full and effective Indigenous participation in all ongoing and future negotiations; and (2) Member States, UN entities, and the private sector to invest in Indigenous-led preparatory processes and in strengthening mechanisms such as the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples and the Indigenous Coordinating Body.