UN Expert Seminar on the rights of Indigenous Peoples in conflict and post-conflict situations

to inform the study of the

United Nations Expert Mechanism the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Venue: Palais des Nations, Building A, Room V

3-5 December 2025

Background

1. Established by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2007, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, EMRIP, provides the Council with expertise and advice on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNDRIP. It is composed of seven members, serving in their individual capacities.
2. In September 2016, the Human Rights Council amended the mandate of the Expert Mechanism, to include inter alia the preparation of an annual study on the status of the rights of Indigenous Peoples worldwide in the achievement of the ends of the Declaration, focusing on one or more interrelated articles of the Declaration, at its own choice.
3. In this framework, the EMRIP will hold **a two day and a half expert seminar** on the theme of its next annual study **"the rights of Indigenous Peoples in conflict and post-conflict situations"**. This theme was selected by the Expert Mechanism during its eighteenth session for its next annual study to be presented to the Human Rights Council at its 63rd session in September 2026. A draft of the study will be discussed and finalized by the EMRIP during the 19th annual session of the Expert Mechanism from 13-17 July 2026 in Geneva, Switzerland.
4. The seminar will take place **in Geneva, from 3 December (afternoon) to 5 December 2025.** The seminar will be hosted by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
5. The objective of the Expert Seminar is to broaden the analysis to inform the Expert Mechanism on the theme as reflected in UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which includes access to fair and effective mechanisms of conflict resolution and remedy.

6. The UNDRIP preamble recognizes the historical injustices resulting from colonization and the dispossession of lands, territories, and resources, and highlights the contribution of the demilitarization of Indigenous territories to peace, progress, and cooperation among peoples. It also affirms that the recognition of Indigenous rights fosters harmonious relations between States and Indigenous peoples, based on justice, democracy, non-discrimination, and good faith.
7. Indigenous participation in peace processes is based on the right to self-determination (Art. 3), autonomy (Art. 4), and effective participation (Art. 18 and 19). The Declaration also enshrines the right to life, security, and peace (Art. 7), the prohibition of forced displacement (Art. 10), and demilitarization (Art. 30). The articles on lands and resources (Art. 25–29, 32), reparation (Art. 28, 37, 40), and the role of the UN and States (Art. 41 and 42) strengthen this framework.
8. The seminar will build on several previous studies and reports conducted by the Expert Mechanism on related topics, including the impact of militarization on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, reconciliation, treaties and other constructive arrangements. The seminar will provide an opportunity for exchange among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics, practitioners, advocates, and other experts on the issues concerning Indigenous Peoples' human rights.
9. The studies and advice of the Expert Mechanism provide a better understanding of the provisions of the Declaration and propose concrete actions that States, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, national human rights institutions, intergovernmental, international and regional organizations, businesses, and others can take in order to further its implementation.[1]

Objectives

10. Today, peacebuilding processes face complex challenges linked to protracted conflicts, environmental crises, structural inequalities, and forced displacement. In this context, Indigenous peoples play a significant role as actors in promoting dialogue, reconciliation, and peacebuilding. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) provides a normative framework for positioning them as relevant actors in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, as well as in subsequent reconstruction processes.
11. The seminar is conceived as a space for analysis and dialogue aimed at strengthening approaches and strategies consistent with the Declaration, with a view to strengthening the role and prominence of Indigenous peoples in peacebuilding processes and consolidating

[1] To date, the Expert Mechanism has carried out studies on themes including Indigenous Peoples' rights with respect to their cultural heritage; access to justice for Indigenous Peoples; the right to health and Indigenous Peoples; right to participate in decision-making; the right of Indigenous Peoples to education; the free, prior and informed consent; migration; right to land; indigenous children; and treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements, the impact of militarization on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and ; Constitutions, laws, legislation, policies, constitutions, judicial decisions and other mechanisms through which States have taken measures to achieve the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in accordance with article 38 of the Declaration and the rights of Indigenous Peoples to data, including data collection and disaggregation.

lasting solutions that respect and protect human rights. Against this framework, the objectives are:

- Analyse the historical and structural causes of conflict affecting Indigenous Peoples, and the ongoing impact in post-conflict contexts
- Identify applicable international human rights, humanitarian, and transitional justice standards to Indigenous Peoples, with an emphasis on UNDRIP
- Examine the impact of conflict and post-conflict interventions on the rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Identify how emerging threats to peace and security (e.g. climate change) impact Indigenous Peoples rights and persistent gaps in addressing these threats vis-à-vis Indigenous Peoples' rights.
- Highlight and exchange good practices and lessons learned relating to the theme and contribute to a human rights-based approach to conflict preventive diplomacy, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and mediation in line with the UNDRIP.

Focus of study

- Conceptualizing **conflict and post-conflict** for the purposes of the study: **Conflict** encompassing armed and structural violence, including militarization, occupation, forced displacement, and systemic violence linked to colonization, resource extraction, or political repression, among others. This framing acknowledges that for many Indigenous Peoples, colonization and dispossession are **ongoing forms of conflict**, not discrete past events.
- **Post-conflict** understood as transitional periods following such violence, including rehabilitation and humanitarian responses, peace processes, transitional justice, and reconstruction phases where Indigenous rights remain at risk.
- Patterns of **violence and historical roots** of conflict affecting Indigenous Peoples.
- Identify applicable international human rights, humanitarian, and transitional justice standards to Indigenous Peoples, with an emphasis on UNDRIP.
- Examine **the impact of conflict and post-conflict interventions on the rights of Indigenous Peoples**, including illustrative examples.
- **Indigenous governance in conflict prevention diplomacy and conflict resolution.** Emphasize Indigenous-led peacebuilding and conflict transformation, exploring governance systems, customary laws including the role of Indigenous women and youth, and diplomatic traditions as mechanisms of stability and reconciliation.
- **Connect climate and environmental security to peacebuilding**, recognizing that resource extraction, land and biodiversity degradation, and climate displacement drive

contemporary conflicts. Indigenous environmental governance will be framed as a peacebuilding strategy, linking to EMRIP's prior work on free, prior and informed consent and sustainable economies.

- **The role and prominence of Indigenous Peoples in peacebuilding processes and consolidating lasting solutions that respect and protect human rights.** Examine good practices and lessons learned by identifying the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in:
  - ✓ conflict resolutions, peace agreements and negotiations, including the analysis of participation in governance and political reconstruction in post-conflict settings.
  - ✓ customary law and Indigenous governance in conflict resolution.
  - ✓ Indigenous-led peacebuilding initiatives.
  - ✓ human rights mechanisms and jurisprudence.
  - ✓ formal and informal/ traditional and non-traditional mechanisms to resolve conflict between the State and Indigenous Peoples.
- **Geopolitics and great power rivalry as contemporary threats,** focussing on how external interventions and competition for resources may constitute forms of re-colonization and exacerbate Indigenous vulnerability.
- **Examine the role of Indigenous women and youth in conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction processes.**
- **Indigenous self-determining approaches to peace, justice, and environmental balance.**
- **Recommendations** for promoting the rights of Indigenous Peoples in line with the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.