

PRESS RELEASE

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International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, 9 August 2022: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union

On the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, the EU stands in solidarity with the more than 476 million indigenous peoples worldwide - whether the San and the Khoekhoe peoples in South Africa, the Aymara in the Andean Mountain Range, the Māori of New Zealand, the Saami of northern Europe inhabiting Sápmi or the Greenlandic Inuit.

We reiterate our firm commitment towards respect, protection and fulfilment of the rights of indigenous peoples as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and in international human rights law. Indigenous peoples inhabit nearly a quarter of the world's land surface. They are critical custodians and defenders of more than 80 % of our biological diversity and have a profound understanding of sustainable land management. At the same time, they are among the most affected by the severe impacts of climate change and environmental degradation.

Indigenous peoples' identities are often closely linked to their lands and to their languages. Indigenous languages are complex communication systems developed over millennia. The EU welcomes the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032). More than 4000 indigenous languages are threatened because many of them are neither taught at school, nor used in the public sphere.

The EU is committed to promoting the participation of indigenous leaders and indigenous human rights defenders in development processes and key global decision-making fora. Applying the principle to consult with indigenous peoples in good faith in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent in decisions affecting them remains critical. The EU is also taking action for more effective rules on responsible business conduct to foster sustainable and responsible corporate behaviour, including on indigenous lands.

The EU has repeatedly raised the situation of human rights defenders. At least 358 human rights defenders were killed in 2021. Nearly 60% were brave land, environment or indigenous rights defenders, and more than a quarter were themselves indigenous. Each of them is one too many. The EU will continue to leverage its policies, dialogues, financing instruments and all other tools to support indigenous peoples, and to end impunity.

The candidate countries Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania¹, Ukraine and Republic of Moldova, the potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina¹, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this declaration.

¹North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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