

18th Session EMRIP

Agenda Item 9: Enhancing the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the United Nations

Wednesday 16 July, 2025

Joint Statement from the Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Canada including:

Laurie Buffalo, Grand Chief Edward John, Cheryl Knockwood, Chief Wilton Littlechild, Kirby Muldoe, Lea Nicholas-MacKenzie

Assembly of First Nations, British Columbia Treaty Commission, Canadian Friends Service Committee, Giganawenimaanig (We All Take Care of Them), Ermineskin Cree Nation, Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) / Cree Nation Government, Indigenous World Association, Metis National Council, National Family and Survivors Circle Inc., Samson Cree Nation, Tl'azt'en Nation (Canada), Tsilhqot'in National Government, Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, WIN Sports International

We are pleased to present the following Joint Statement on behalf of a number of Indigenous Nations and organizations, as well as human rights organizations in Canada.

The Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples welcomes and supports the process for enhancing the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the Human Rights Council. We would like to thank the co-facilitators for their report on the outcomes of the two intersessional meetings.

Further, we'd like to highlight and underscore two of the recommendations to the EMRIP:

- 1) Paragraph 76 states that the establishment of a new accreditation status must be granted to Indigenous Peoples as collectives, not as individuals. The collective right to self-determination is a right enjoyed only by peoples, and not organizations or other groups. The enhanced participation process must continue to reaffirm this.
- 2) Paragraph 72 of the intersessional meetings report underscores this recognition and emphasizes the distinction of Indigenous Peoples from NGOs. As collectives who hold the right to self-determination, Indigenous Peoples must have a status that recognizes they are peoples. Since time immemorial, Indigenous Peoples have exercised their own governance, created their own laws, and stewarded their own territory.

To be clear, Indigenous Peoples, Tribes, and Nations around the world have robust civil societies that play an important role. However, it is important to recognize that NGOs and civil society groups already have the ability to participate in their own right, yet those who hold the right to self-determination - Indigenous Peoples through their representative institutions, do not.

Paragraph 81 recommends the creation of a new, independent accreditation mechanism to determine the eligibility of Indigenous Peoples, Tribes, and Nations for the new, separate accreditation status. This new mechanism must be led by Indigenous Peoples from each of the seven socio-cultural regions. It must also be adequately funded and include a well-staffed secretariat. This funding is crucial to effectively enhancing the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the Human Rights Council.

Enhanced participation of Indigenous Peoples in the Human Rights Council stems directly from Article 3 of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* that affirms Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination. This article was hard fought by several Indigenous Peoples' human rights advocates including EMIRP member Dalee Sambo Dorrough. Self-determination is a right guaranteed to all peoples. Article 3 follows Articles 1 and 2 which articulate that Indigenous Peoples are free and equal to all other peoples and are subjects of international law. While this has always been true, historically, it has not always been recognized in the United Nations or in UN member states. Enhanced participation is a part of correcting the historic lack of recognition.

Enhanced participation through the creation of a new accreditation status for representative institutions of Indigenous Peoples would be a significant and long overdue achievement. A commitment to self-determination must therefore include both a centering of it as a principle in accreditation and sufficient funding to make accreditation possible. To follow through on an accreditation process without sufficient commitment of funds and human resources would be unacceptable.