

25th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Side Event

Draft concept note

Title: [Strengthening Engagement with Indigenous Peoples: Knowledge Systems, Languages, Policy and Practice](#)

Date: 27 April 2026

Time: 13:30–14:45

Room/Venue: Room CR.4, UN HQ, 405 E 45th St, New York, NY 10017, United States

Interpretation: English, Portuguese and Spanish

1. Background and Rationale

The 25th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) provides an important platform to advance dialogue on effective engagement with Indigenous Peoples within United Nations processes and at the national level.

UNESCO's programmes and intergovernmental processes are guided by its [Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples](#). UNESCO is currently updating the Policy to strengthen institutional coherence, operational clarity and accountability across UNESCO's programme areas. The update responds to lessons learned in implementing the 2017 Policy, including the need for clearer mechanisms for meaningful participation, improved cross-sectoral coordination, and stronger monitoring of impact.

The policy update is an occasion for dialogue with Indigenous Peoples Organisations and platforms. It can reinforce rights-based and participatory approaches, clarify mechanisms for meaningful participation and partnership, and strengthen the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge systems and languages across policy and programme implementation, including in mechanisms such as UNESCO-designated sites (World Heritage, Biospheres, Global Geoparks).

This side event will provide a space for dialogue among Indigenous representatives, Member States, scientific experts and UN partners. It will inform the update of the UNESCO Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples and will highlight concrete actions and partnerships. The discussion will focus on practical entry points for co-creation, accountability, and sustained partnership across UNESCO's sciences, education, culture and communication programmes, ensuring that contributions gathered during the Forum directly inform the Policy framework.

2. Objectives

- Facilitate dialogue on practical and institutional approaches to meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples.
- Identify practical approaches to integrating Indigenous knowledge systems and languages into policy and programme implementation.
- Gather recommendations to inform the revision of the UNESCO Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples.
- Highlight partnerships and experiences demonstrating joint mobilization of Indigenous and scientific knowledge systems.
- Promoting rights-based, participatory and intercultural approaches across UN processes.

3. Key Themes

- Participation beyond consultation: co-design, co-governance and shared accountability;

- Inclusion of Indigenous knowledge systems into biodiversity, climate, education, culture and science policies;
- Recognition of Indigenous languages as vehicles of knowledge transmission;
- Institutional safeguards, including data sovereignty and protection of knowledge systems;
- National and international mechanisms that support sustained engagement.

4. Format (75 minutes: 13:15-14:30)

- 13:15 – 13:25 | Opening Remarks (UNESCO representative, Member State and Indigenous representative) (10 min)
- 13:25 – 14:05 | Multi-Stakeholder Panel Dialogue (Indigenous Peoples, Member States, youth and UN partners, TBC) (40 min)
- 14:05 – 14:25 | Interactive Dialogue with Participants (20 min)
- 14:25 – 14:30 | Key Takeaways and Next Steps (5 min)

Each panelist will be invited to address one concrete example of meaningful engagement, one institutional mechanism that enabled it, and one recommendation for strengthening policy and practice.

5. Expected Outcomes

- Actionable recommendations to inform the update of the UNESCO Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples;
- Identification of institutional mechanisms that strengthen participation and partnership (reference groups, participatory governance models, co-designed programmes);
- Enhanced dialogue between Indigenous Peoples and Member States;
- Greater visibility of Indigenous knowledge systems and languages as pillars of policy coherence.

6. Target Audience

This side event is open to partners and stakeholders attending the 25th session of the Permanent Forum, including:

- Indigenous leaders and knowledge holders
- Member State delegates
- United Nations agencies and intergovernmental bodies
- Experts in biodiversity, climate, education and cultural heritage
- Civil society organizations
- Youth representatives

7. Organisers

UNESCO's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) Programme, in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples partners, experts and Member States.