



United Nations
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

25th Session
New York, 20 April – 1 May 2026



A Systemic Assessment Report

Providing a Comprehensive Review of the Work of the UN Permanent
Forum On Indigenous Issues
To Improve And Strengthen Its Effectiveness

April 2026

Contents

Summary	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Historical and Institutional Foundations of UNPFII	6
3. Methodological Entry Point	7
4. Quantitative Analysis	9
4.1 The Matter of Recognition and Access	10
4.2 The Matter of Legitimacy	11
4.3 The Matter of Structural Priorities	12
4.4 The Matter of Legitimacy	13
4.5 The Matter of Communication and Future Priorities	13
4.6 Toward a Structural Diagnosis	14
5. Qualitative Analysis	14
5.1 The Matter of Visibility and Lived Impact	15
5.2 The Matter of Participation	15
5.3 The Matter of Regional Equality and Decentralization	16
5.5 The Matter of Inclusion	17
5.6 Follow-Up, Monitoring, and Accountability	18
5.7 Safety, Reprisals, and Harassment	19
5.8 The Matter of Colonial Patterns	20
5.9 Secretariat Performance and Internal Trust	20
5.10 Knowledge Products	21
5.11 The Matter of Collaboration	21
5.12 Political Context and Grievances	22
6. Conclusion, Recommendations, and Pathways For Institutional Transformation	23
6.1 From Assessment to Action	24
6.2 Strategic Objectives and Action Pathways	25

Summary

■ A Systemic Assessment Report Providing a Comprehensive Review of the Work of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) to Improve and Strengthen Its Effectiveness

In direct response to the continued, recurring and increasingly explicit demand that emerged from Indigenous Peoples, their representative organizations, and members of the Forum itself of the need to assess the Forum's effectiveness, relevance, and impact and which is fundamentally based on para 7 and 8 of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 2000/22 on the Establishment of a UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the UNPFII took a decisive institutional step at its twenty-fourth session. As formally recorded in para 106 of its report:

“The Permanent Forum decided to comprehensively assess its work to improve and strengthen the Forum's effectiveness. It will be carried out at no cost by a volunteer group of current Forum members, who can invite former members from the seven sociocultural regions to make contributions. The Forum will report on this process at its twenty-fifth session.”

In the Present Report, a volunteer group of current and former members of the Forum Lead Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Geoffrey Roth, Hanieh Moghani, contributors Hannah McGlade, Valentina Sovkina, Rodrigo Paillalef, Vital Bamanze, Naw Ei Ei Min, Joan Carling, Myrna Cunningham Kain and, Tarcila Rivera Zea conducted a global study to gather reflections, experiences, and recommendations from Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Peoples' organizations, and allies worldwide. The present report, situated within research and broader assessment process and contributes to its analytical and empirical foundations.

1. Introduction

■ The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) is a high-level advisory body to the Economic and Social Council. The Forum was established on 28 July 2000 by resolution 2000/22,¹ with the mandate to deal with indigenous issues related to economic and social development,² culture,³ the environment,⁴ education,⁵ health,⁶ and human rights.⁷ More specifically, the Permanent Forum:

- A. Provides expert advice and recommendations on Indigenous issues to the Council, as well as to programs, funds, and agencies of the United Nations, through ECOSOC;
- B. Raises awareness and promotes the integration and coordination of activities related to Indigenous issues within the UN system;
- C. Prepares and disseminates information on Indigenous issues;
- D. Promotes respect for and full application of the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and follow up the effectiveness of this Declaration (Art. 42 UNDRIP).

In addition to the six mandated areas (economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health, and human rights), each session is thematically focused on a specific issue.

Importantly, the question of evaluation and institutional effectiveness was embedded within the Forum's founding architecture. In its establishing resolution, ECOSOC explicitly decided that, five years after its establishment, an evaluation of the functioning of the Permanent Forum, should be undertaken in light of the experience gained.⁸ Furthermore, the Council also decided to review existing

UN mechanisms, procedures, and programmes related to Indigenous issues, with a view to rationalizing activities, avoiding duplication and overlap, and promoting overall effectiveness.⁹ These provisions reflect an early recognition that the Forum's legitimacy and impact would depend not only on its mandate but also on its capacity for institutional coherence, coordination, and periodic self-assessment.

Over the past two decades, the UNPFII has occupied a central position as the primary global advisory body addressing the rights and concerns of Indigenous Peoples within the UN system. However, alongside its institutional consolidation, a recurring and increasingly explicit demand has emerged from Indigenous Peoples, their representative organizations, and members of the Forum itself: the need to assess the Forum's effectiveness, relevance, and impact.

These calls have not been sporadic. Rather, they have been repeatedly articulated across sessions, side events, Indigenous Peoples' networks, and formal and informal consultations. They reflect a growing awareness that while UNPFII has succeeded in establishing itself as a visible and legitimate global platform, questions remain regarding its ability to translate dialogue, recommendations, and knowledge production into tangible outcomes for Indigenous Peoples on the ground.

¹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). (2000). *Establishment of a United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*. <https://social.desa.un.org/unpfii/establishment-of-a-un-permanent-forum-on-indigenous-issues>

² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). (n.d.). *UNPFII mandated areas: Economic and social development*. <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/unpfii-mandated-areas-economic-and-social-development>

³ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). (n.d.). *UNPFII mandated areas: Culture*. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/mandated-areas1/culture.html>

⁴ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). (n.d.). *UNPFII mandated areas: Environment*. <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/unpfii-mandated-areas-environment>

⁵ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). (n.d.). *UNPFII mandated areas: Education*. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/mandated-areas1/education.html>

⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). (n.d.). *UNPFII mandated areas: Health*. <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/unpfii-mandated-areas-health>

⁷ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). (n.d.). *UNPFII mandated areas: Human rights*. <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/unpfii-mandated-areas-human-rights>

⁸ ECOSOC resolution 2000/22, para. 7

⁹ *ibid.*, para. 8

In direct response to these sustained demands, the UNPFII took a decisive institutional step at its twenty-fourth session. As formally recorded:

“The Permanent Forum decided to comprehensively assess its work to improve and strengthen the Forum’s effectiveness. It will be carried out at no cost by a volunteer group of current Forum members, who can invite former members from the seven sociocultural regions to make contributions. The Forum will report on this process at its twenty-fifth session.”¹⁰

This decision is not merely procedural. It represents a moment of institutional reflexivity, an acknowledgement by the Forum itself that its legitimacy and future effectiveness depend on its willingness to critically examine its own structures, processes, and outcomes.

In line with this mandate, a volunteer assessment group composed of current and former UNPFII members has initiated a global report to gather reflections, experiences, and recommendations from Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Peoples’ organizations, and allies worldwide. The present report is situated within this broader assessment process and contributes to its analytical and empirical foundations. The empirical foundation of this report is a global, multilingual questionnaire that received more than 200 responses from Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Peoples’ organizations, and allies across all seven sociocultural regions of Indigenous Peoples worldwide ((i) Africa; ii) the Arctic; iii) Asia; iv) Central and South America and the Caribbean; v) Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia; vi) North America; and vii) the Pacific). The questionnaire was made available in English, Spanish, French, Russian, and Portuguese, with the explicit objective of minimizing linguistic barriers to participation and ensuring broad accessibility across diverse regions. The design, translation, and dissemination of the questionnaire were undertaken by a volunteer research

team composed of current and former members of the UNPFII. This is methodologically significant, as it reflects both institutional knowledge and a direct line of accountability to the Forum’s mandate. The dissemination strategy relied on established Indigenous Peoples’ networks, including social media platforms, targeted email outreach, and direct circulation through Indigenous Peoples’ organizations and community-based networks across all seven sociocultural regions. This approach was intentionally selected to maximize outreach while remaining grounded in Indigenous Peoples-led communication channels. All contributions have been treated with strict attention to confidentiality and data protection, ensuring that participants’ identities and inputs remain secure. Furthermore, the analysis of these data has not been conducted in isolation. Rather, it has been systematically triangulated with a comprehensive review of existing literature and institutional materials, including:

- Official reports of the Forum’s sessions
- Statements delivered by Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants during annual sessions
- Relevant reports and documentation from United Nations agencies.

¹⁰ United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2025, para. 106, *Report on the twenty-fourth session*, E/2025/43–E/C.19/2025/8, available at: <https://undocs.org/E/2025/43>

2. Historical and Institutional Foundations of UNPFII

■ To understand the significance of this assessment, it is necessary to situate UNPFII within its historical and institutional context.

The UNPFII was established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) through resolution 2000/22 as a high-level advisory body addressing Indigenous issues across six mandated areas: economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health, and human rights.¹¹

As summarized in the Forum’s institutional description, it:

- Provides expert advice and recommendations to ECOSOC and the wider UN system
- Raises awareness and promotes coordination on Indigenous issues
- Prepares and disseminates information
- Supports the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), particularly under Article 42.¹²

UNPFII is also one of the three core UN mechanisms dedicated specifically to Indigenous Peoples’ rights, alongside the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Its work is supported institutionally by the UN Trust Fund on Indigenous Issues, which facilitates participation, outreach, and follow-up activities. Over the past two decades, the UNPFII has generated a substantial and multifaceted body of outputs, including 25 annual session reports submitted to ECOSOC,¹³ alongside a very considerable numbers volume of recommendations and an expanding set of additional outputs such as expert group meeting reports, thematic studies, and analytical papers. While the number of annual reports can be stated with precision, the total number of recommendations, estimated to range between 1,000 and 2,000, as well as the full corpus of additional outputs, cannot be determined with exactitude. This is primarily due to structural characteristics of the UN documentation system: recommendations are embedded within broader reports rather than issued as standalone documents; multiple document types are produced under diverse formats (including L-documents, INF documents, and thematic reports); and the UN document

symbol system reflects administrative sequencing rather than substantive aggregation. Consequently, despite the clear scale and normative density of the Forum’s work, no single consolidated or authoritative figure exists that captures the total volume of its recommendations and related analytical outputs.

Over time, the Forum has evolved in its working methods, thematic focus, and engagement with Indigenous Peoples, UN entities, and Member States. It has contributed significantly to placing Indigenous Peoples’ issues on the global agenda, including through expert studies, thematic sessions, and recommendations that have influenced broader UN processes.

However, this evolution has also revealed structural limitations. As noted in internal and system-wide reflections, including reviews of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies, UNPFII’s recommendations are transmitted annually through reports, but their implementation depends largely on the voluntary engagement of states and UN agencies (United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management [UN-GGIM], 2022).

Furthermore, feedback from Indigenous Peoples’ and UN actors has repeatedly highlighted operational challenges, including:

- Difficulty in translating recommendations into actionable policies
- Lack of clear implementation pathways across UN agencies
- Insufficient administrative and institutional support for follow-up
- Limited clarity in the full “cycle” of recommendations from articulation to impact

These challenges have led to a growing recognition that effectiveness cannot be assumed from normative output alone. Rather, it must be assessed through the entire chain of production, dissemination, uptake, and implementation of recommendations.

¹¹ United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2000, *E/RES/2000/22*, available at: <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/E-RES-2000-22.pdf>

¹² UNPFII, n.d., *About the Permanent Forum*, available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/unpfii-2.html>

¹³ Corresponding to its sessions from 2002 to 2026

3. Methodological Entry Point

- Within this institutional and historical context, the present report adopts a mixed-methods approach, in which quantitative survey data functions as a structured entry point into deeper qualitative responses and analysis.

The empirical foundation of this report is a global, multilingual questionnaire that received more than 200 responses from Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Peoples' organizations, and allies across all seven sociocultural regions (i) Africa; ii) the Arctic; iii) Asia; iv) Central and South America and the Caribbean; v) Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia; vi) North America; and vii) the Pacific.) of Indigenous Peoples worldwide. The questionnaire was made available in English, Spanish, French, Russian, and Portuguese, with the explicit objective of minimizing linguistic barriers to participation and ensuring broader accessibility across diverse regions.

The design, translation, and dissemination of the questionnaire were undertaken by a volunteer research team composed of current and former members of the UNPFII. This is methodologically significant, as it reflects both institutional knowledge and direct accountability to the Forum's mandate. The dissemination strategy relied on existing Indigenous Peoples' networks, including social media platforms, targeted email outreach, and direct circulation through Indigenous Peoples' organizations and community-based networks across all seven socio cultural regions. This approach was intentionally chosen to maximize reach while remaining grounded in Indigenous-led channels of communication.

The questionnaire was designed to capture both measurable patterns and experiential insights. While the qualitative responses provide rich, narrative evidence of lived realities, the quantitative data offer a critical first layer of analysis by revealing consistent patterns across all seven socio cultural regions, roles, and levels of engagement.

Importantly, the quantitative findings should not be interpreted as isolated statistical outputs. Rather, they should be read as indicators of underlying structural dynamics, patterns that signal how the Forum is experienced, accessed, and evaluated by Indigenous Peoples themselves. In this sense, the quantitative data does not merely describe perceptions; it reveals the contours of institutional inclusion, exclusion, effectiveness, and legitimacy as lived and understood across diverse Indigenous Peoples' contexts.

At a deeper level, the very process of conducting this report may itself be understood as a practical exercise in the realization of the fundamental right to self-determination of Indigenous Peoples. By designing, disseminating, and responding to this questionnaire through Indigenous Peo-

ples-led networks and structures, participants actively engaged in shaping the evaluative narrative of an international institution that is mandated to represent their rights and concerns.

It is therefore essential to underscore that the participants in this research must not be reduced to abstract data points. They are, first and foremost, human beings articulating their lived realities, experiences, and expectations. Their contributions reflect not passive data generation, but active, voluntary, and conscious engagement in response to a collective call for reflection and transformation. Many responses were submitted on behalf of Indigenous Peoples' organizations, reflecting collective positions and institutional perspectives, while others were provided by individual Indigenous leaders, experts, and knowledge holders, contributing personal yet deeply situated insights.

All contributions have been treated with strict attention to confidentiality and data protection, ensuring that participants' identities and inputs remain secure. Furthermore, the analysis of these data has not been conducted in isolation. Rather, it has been systematically triangulated with a comprehensive review of existing literature and institutional materials, including:

- Official reports of the Forum's sessions
- Statements delivered by Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants during annual sessions
- Relevant reports and documentation from United Nations agencies

This triangulated approach ensures that the findings presented here are not only empirically grounded but also situated within the broader institutional, normative, and political landscape in which UNPFII operates. Building on this framework, the report is also the outcome of several months of sustained, iterative, and collaborative engagement by the team. This process unfolded through a hybrid working modality that combined synchronous and asynchronous forms of interaction, primarily conducted in English, with simultaneous Spanish and Russian translation where required to ensure inclusivity and effective participation.

The process began with the identification of volunteer contributors and the formation of a dedicated working group, followed by continuous coordination through digital communication channels, including Zoom, WhatsApp,

and email. Substantive work was carried forward asynchronously through shared platforms, particularly Google Docs, which enabled the collective drafting, refinement, and consolidation of specialized sections of the report.

This collaborative effort extended across multiple interconnected stages: the conceptualization, development, and finalization of the questionnaire; its dissemination through Indigenous Peoples' networks worldwide in multiple languages; and the subsequent analysis and interpretation of the responses. In parallel, the team engaged in an ongoing review and synthesis of the Permanent Forum's reports, thematic studies, and other relevant knowledge outputs, alongside additional specialized materials.

Taken together, this process reflects a distributed yet coordinated model of knowledge production—one that is grounded in lived expertise, sustained dialogue, and collective responsibility. It reinforces the methodological integrity of the report by ensuring that its findings are not only empirically robust but also co-produced through the active engagement of those directly connected to the Forum's mandate and its broader constituencies.

4. Quantitative Analysis

Given the centrality of inclusiveness as a guiding principle of this assessment, the questionnaire was adopted as a primary entry point for both knowledge generation and the synthesis of the report. Accordingly, the analysis begins with the examination of questionnaire data.

The questionnaire was intentionally designed to balance accessibility with analytical depth. It consisted of 17 structured, multiple-choice questions, allowing for the systematic capture of comparable data across respondents. At the same time, to avoid restricting participants' perspectives within predefined categories, each section included optional comment boxes enabling respondents to elaborate on their answers beyond the structured format. In addition, a final open-ended section was provided to capture any further reflections, critiques, or insights that could not be accommodated within the questionnaire's framework.

The present section focuses on the analysis of responses derived from the structured components of the questionnaire. While the primary emphasis is placed on quantitative patterns emerging from these responses, relevant qualitative insights associated with this section are also incorporated where necessary to deepen interpretation and contextualize the findings.

A first and critical observation emerging from the data concerns the profile and positionality of respondents. A substantial proportion identify as members of Indigenous communities or organizations (43.4%), Indigenous individuals (28.3%), or representatives of Indigenous Peoples' institutions (16.2%). This distribution indicates that the assessment is grounded primarily within Indigenous Peoples' constituencies rather than external observers. Moreover, the high levels of familiarity with UNPFII, over 90% of respondents reporting either "very familiar" or "somewhat familiar", combined with sustained engagement over time

(with nearly 70% having more than two years of awareness or involvement), demonstrate that the responses reflect informed, experience-based evaluations.

From an analytical perspective, this is significant. The dataset does not capture distant or abstract opinions; rather, it reflects what may be described as embedded critique, a form of evaluation emerging from within the institutional and political field in which UNPFII operates. In other words, the findings should not be interpreted as external dissatisfaction, but as internally grounded, reflexive assessment.

Geographically, the distribution of responses further reinforces the robustness of the dataset. With Africa (33.3%), Asia (26.3%), Central and South America and the Caribbean (17.2%), North America (10.1%), Pacific (7%) representing the largest shares, alongside participation from Arctic (3.1%) and Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, Central Asia, and Transcaucasia (3%), the data reflects a cross-regional pattern rather than a localized or context-specific critique. This is methodologically important, as it suggests that the patterns identified are not confined to a particular geographical context, but instead point toward structural features of the Forum's institutional architecture.



Figure 1. Positionality of respondents.

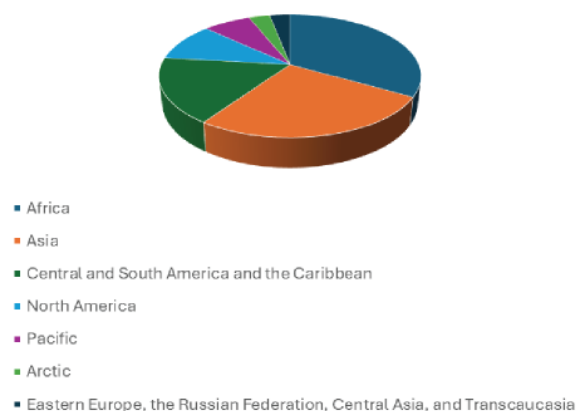


Figure 2. Geographic contribution.

4.1 The Matter of Recognition and Access

- The UNPFII is widely recognized as a legitimate and relevant institution. Respondents demonstrate high levels of familiarity, long-term engagement, and clear awareness of their role within Indigenous Peoples' advocacy landscapes. This indicates that the Forum has successfully established itself as a visible and symbolically significant global platform.

On the other hand, this recognition does not translate into participation. More than half of respondents (51.5%) report that they have never participated in a UNPFII session (in-person). This gap between awareness and participation is one of the most critical findings of the report.

The reasons for this exclusion are overwhelmingly structural:

- High cost of travel (54.5%)
- Administrative and registration barriers (30.3%)
- Lack of information (29.3%)
- Visa and mobility restrictions (27.3%)

Also respondents mentioned language barriers and perceived lack of relevance. This distribution is analytically decisive. It demonstrates that exclusion from UNPFII is not driven by disinterest or irrelevance, but by material, bureaucratic, and geopolitical constraints.

In effect, participation in UNPFII is formally open but substantively unequal. The architecture of access privileges those with financial resources, institutional support, mobility, and familiarity with UN procedures, while systematically disadvantaging grassroots actors, community-based representatives, and those operating in more constrained contexts. This finding directly supports the broader interpretation that procedural arrangements, often perceived as neutral, function in practice as mechanisms of stratification.

This interpretation is further reinforced by perceptions of inclusivity. Only 26.3% of respondents consider participation processes to be “fully inclusive,” while a combined 60.4% explicitly characterize them as “limited” or “not inclusive.” This indicates that perceived exclusion is not merely incidental, but structurally embedded in the current modalities of participation.

These structural inequalities are even more pronounced for Indigenous Peoples from developing countries, who face disproportionately higher barriers to participation. Financial constraints, including the cost of international travel, accommodation, and subsistence, are significantly more limiting in contexts where institutional support is scarce or absent. At the same time, restrictive visa re-

gimes, prolonged and uncertain application processes, and, in some cases, outright denial of entry further compound these challenges. As a result, Indigenous representatives specially from developing regions often encounter a double layer of exclusion (both economic and geopolitical) which systematically limits their ability to access and engage with the Forum. This reinforces existing global asymmetries and raises critical concerns regarding equitable representation, as those most directly affected by structural vulnerabilities are also those least able to participate in the very platform mandated to address their rights and concerns.

4.2 The Matter of Legitimacy

- A similarly nuanced pattern emerges in the evaluation of the Forum’s effectiveness. A majority of respondents consider UNPFII to be either “very effective” (31.3%) or “somewhat effective” (34.3%) in advancing the rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, an equally significant proportion (31.3%) indicates that it “needs improvement.” This distribution reflects what may be termed conditional legitimacy: the Forum is valued and recognized, but not uncritically endorsed.

This conditionality becomes more pronounced when examining implementation. The majority of respondents report that UNPFII recommendations are only “sometimes” (33.3%) or “rarely” (47.5%) implemented, with only a small minority (13.1%) perceiving frequent implementation. These figures point to a systemic gap between normative articulation and practical realization.

This gap is further amplified by perceptions of monitoring and accountability. Only 6.1% of respondents believe that a clear mechanism exists to track the implementation of recommendations. The majority either consider existing mechanisms insufficient (40.4%), are uncertain about their existence (28.3%), or explicitly state that no formal mechanism is in place (25.3%).

Taken together, these findings indicate that the Forum’s authority is perceived as normatively strong but institutionally weak, capable of producing recommendations, but lacking the mechanisms necessary to ensure their uptake, monitoring, and enforcement. This constitutes a fundamental institutional tension: effectiveness without consequence. This structural tension becomes even more pronounced when considered in light of the scale of the Forum’s normative output. Since its establishment in 2000, the UNPFII has produced well over 1,000 recommendations, in addition to a substantial body of thematic reports, session reports, and other knowledge outputs. This considerable volume reflects a sustained and cumulative effort to articulate Indigenous Peoples’ rights, priorities, and concerns across a wide range of thematic areas. However, the data presented above suggests that the proliferation of recommendations has not been matched by corresponding mechanisms for implementation, follow-up, and accountability. In this sense, the issue is not the absence of normative guidance, but rather the matter of capacity to translate this extensive body of recommendations into tangible and measurable outcomes. The result is a paradox of productivity: an institution that is highly active in generating normative frameworks, yet constrained in its ability to ensure their realization, thereby reinforcing the condition of legitimacy that is recognized, but ultimately contingent.

4.3 The Matter of Structural Priorities

■ The structural dimensions of this institutional tension become particularly visible when examining how respondents prioritize areas for transformation and improvement within the Forum.

The hierarchy of priorities identified by respondents further clarifies the nature of this tension. When asked which areas require the most improvement, respondents overwhelmingly prioritize:

- Implementation and follow-up of recommendations (76.8%)
- Inclusivity and regional representation (62.6%)
- Communication and outreach (48.5%)
- Coordination with other Indigenous Peoples’ mechanisms (45.5%)

It indicates that the central concern is the lack of continuity between deliberation and outcome. Similarly, proposed measures to strengthen accountability emphasize:

- Greater involvement of Indigenous Peoples’ organiza-

- tions (76.8%)
- Development of regional monitoring frameworks (69.7%)
- Regular reporting by states and all related UN bodies (61.6%)
- Stronger coordination with mechanisms such as EMRIP (40.4%)

These responses point toward a clear demand for a reconfiguration of authority and governance. Rather than calling for more centralized control, respondents advocate for a multi-level, decentralized, and Indigenous Peoples-led accountability architecture, in which monitoring and evaluation are anchored closer to communities and regions.

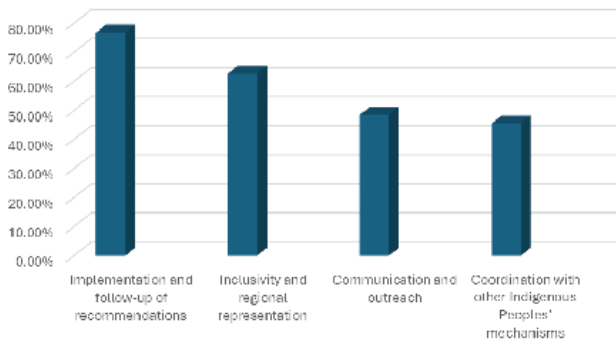


Figure 3. Areas for improvement within the Forum

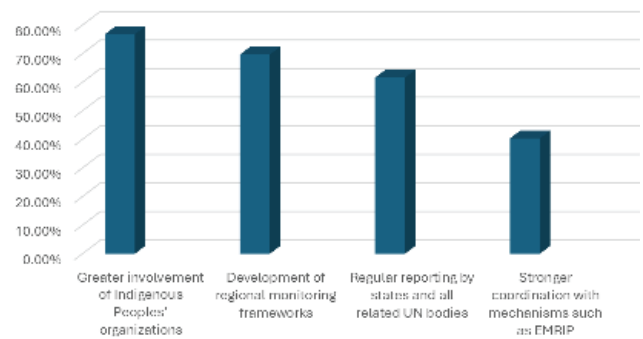


Figure 4. Areas for transformation within the Forum

4.4 The Matter of Legitimacy

- The data on perceived strengths of UNPFII further sharpens this diagnosis. Respondents identify advocacy for Indigenous Peoples' rights (65.7%) and the provision of a platform for dialogue (64.6%) as the Forum's most significant contributions. Knowledge production and engagement follow as additional strengths.

This confirms that UNPFII's primary value lies in its discursive and normative capacity, its ability to articulate issues, generate visibility, and convene actors. However, these very strengths simultaneously highlight its limitations. The Forum is perceived as strong in norm production, but comparatively weak in norm translation, that is, in ensuring that its outputs lead to sustained institutional and political change.

This duality is also reflected in perceptions of knowledge accessibility. While a majority consider UNPFII's reports and outputs to be useful (53.4%), a significant proportion report limited use or accessibility (46.2%). This suggests that the challenge is not only the production of knowledge, but its circulation, localization, and integration into practice.

4.5 The Matter of Communication and Future Priorities

- Responses regarding communication tools indicate a clear preference for a multi-layered and culturally grounded outreach strategy. Webinars (71.7%), social media (60.6%), community radio and local networks (58.6%), and Indigenous-language materials (51.5%) are all identified as important.

This reflects a broader demand to decentralize communication and move beyond reliance on formal UN channels. The prominence of Indigenous-language materials and community-based media is particularly significant, as it points toward the need to decolonize not only participation but also the modalities of communication themselves.

Similarly, the prioritization of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, climate change, women, youth and intergenerational issues, and land and territories suggests a shift toward a more integrated understanding of rights, one that situates UNPFII within contemporary global challenges and emphasizes the interconnections between knowledge systems, environmental governance, and collective survival.

4.6 Toward a Structural Diagnosis

- Taken together, these quantitative findings provide more than descriptive insight; they reveal a coherent structural diagnosis.

UNPFII is:

- **Recognized but not fully accessible**
- **Influential in discourse but limited in implementation**
- **Inclusive in principle but unequal in practice**
- **Productive in recommendations but weak in follow-up**

In theoretical terms, this suggests that the central challenge facing UNPFII is not a crisis of legitimacy, but a crisis

of institutional translation, the inability to convert recognized authority into effective and accountable outcomes.

This diagnosis directly sets the stage for the qualitative analysis that follows. The patterns identified here are not abstract; they are experienced and articulated in concrete terms by respondents themselves. As will be demonstrated in the next section, these lived experiences converge around a central theme: a growing gap between the symbolic visibility of UNPFII and its material impact on the lives of Indigenous Peoples.

5 Qualitative Analysis

- The final section of the questionnaire included an open-ended response box, inviting participants to articulate, in their own words, any reflections, concerns, or recommendations they wished to share about the related concerns beyond the structured questions. Notably, an overwhelming majority of respondents engaged with this section, providing responses that were not only substantive but often remarkably detailed, reflective, and analytically rich.

These contributions go far beyond supplementary commentary. They constitute a critical body of qualitative evidence through which respondents express their lived experiences, institutional critiques, and normative expectations regarding the UNPFII. The depth and consistency of these responses underscore both the urgency of the issues raised and the strong willingness of participants to actively contribute to the assessment process.

The analysis of these responses reveals a set of recurring themes and structural concerns. These can be systematically understood through the following thematic clusters.

5.1 The Matter of Visibility and Lived Impact

- The clearest cross-cutting finding is the perception of a growing gap between UNPFII as a visible symbolic space and UNPFII as an institution capable of producing material, political, and protective effects in the lives of Indigenous Peoples. Many respondents appreciate the Forum as a place of visibility, exchange, and recognition. Yet a large number also characterize it as overly performative, a “talk shop,” or a space in which testimony is heard but not translated into meaningful change.

This critique is not a rejection of dialogue. Rather, it is a rejection of dialogue without consequence. Respondents repeatedly describe a pattern in which recommendations are produced, reports are issued, speeches are delivered, and side events are organized, but violations still exist even in the Forum itself, extractive projects continue, defenders remain at risk, communities remain excluded, States often ignore the recommendations without consequence and moreover, significant challenges persist in the interpretation and implementation of the Forum’s recommendations across UN bodies. The concern is therefore

not that the Forum speaks too much, but that its speech is insufficiently connected to implementation, monitoring, accountability, and protection.

This is perhaps the single most important interpretive conclusion from the comments: many participants do not measure the Forum primarily by the quality of its debates, but by whether it changes institutional behavior, State practice, and the conditions of Indigenous Peoples’ lives, and persistent challenges at both the level of State implementation and within UN bodies in interpreting and operationalizing its recommendations.

5.2 The Matter of Participation

- A further key dominant theme concerns participation. Numerous respondents indicate that access to the Forum is not genuinely equal, even where it is formally available. Several interconnected barriers recur throughout the comments:

First, there is a clear perception that the same people, organizations, and networks are repeatedly present in UNPFII processes, while grassroots actors, first-time participants, community-based leaders, and representatives from remote or marginalized regions struggle to access the space. Respondents describe a pattern of repetition and concentration: the same organizations receive opportunities, the same individuals are funded, and the same elites occupy visibility. This creates a sense that participation has become stratified.

Second, many comments suggest that those who participate most easily are often individuals with internet access, English or other major-language proficiency, digital literacy, travel capacity, institutional affiliation, and familiarity with UN procedures. By implication, Indigenous Peoples living in their own territories, especially those without strong connectivity or dominant-language fluency, are structurally disadvantaged. This means that the Forum risks hearing disproportionately from the already-

networked rather than from those most affected.

Third, respondents repeatedly stress that representation is not simply a question of numbers. They distinguish between elite participation and legitimate participation. Several comments explicitly criticize the presence of delegates who are seen as unaccountable to communities, insufficiently legitimate, more interested in self-promotion, or disconnected from territorial realities. This indicates that the problem is not only underrepresentation, but misrepresentation.

The cumulative significance of these comments is profound: a forum designed to amplify Indigenous Peoples voices may inadvertently reproduce internal and external hierarchies unless participation is actively restructured around accountability, rotation, accessibility, and territorial legitimacy.

5.3 The Matter of Regional Equality and Decentralization

- Many comments reveal frustration with the geographic concentration of participation and the uneven visibility of regions and peoples. Respondents from the Pacific, Africa, Central and South America, the Caribbean, minority communities within larger States, non-Amazonian Indigenous Peoples in Brazil, Indigenous Peoples from sanctioned and occupied or armed conflict-affected territories all point in different ways to a similar concern: UNPFII does not yet reflect the full diversity of Indigenous Peoples realities in a balanced and consistent manner.

The problem is described not only in terms of attendance at the annual session in New York, but also in terms of year-round engagement. Respondents call for regional meetings, national dialogues, stronger regional presence, direct contact with community organizations, and mechanisms that do not force all meaningful participation through a single annual gathering in New York.

This demand for decentralization has several dimensions. Logistically, it reflects the high cost of travel, visa ban and barriers, and distance. Politically, it reflects frustration that local crises often remain distant from global deliberation. Institutionally, it reflects the view that a body claim-

ing global Indigenous Peoples relevance must maintain stronger and more regular channels with the territories themselves.

The comments, therefore, support a major conclusion: the current architecture of participation remains too centralized in a way that privileges those who can reach it, navigate it, and sustain visibility within it.

Such systemic approaches risk consolidating a one-sided narrative driven by elite perspectives, thereby marginalizing, and, in some cases, silencing the diverse voices of Indigenous Peoples who remain outside dominant institutional networks.

5.4 The Matter of Administrative Practice

- A significant portion of the comments focus on practical barriers: visa delays, visa denials, visa appointment and accessibility to counselors, high travel costs, late sponsorship responses, inaccessible accreditation criteria, INDICO rejections, weak and in some cases a lack of Secretariat capacity, the matter of support and responsiveness and the difficulty of even understanding whether one will be able to speak at the Forum after travelling long distances.

These concerns should not be treated as merely logistical inconveniences however the continuity of mentioning concerns by Indigenous Peoples at the Forum specifically related visa issuance led to a recommendation by the Forum on its Twenty Fifth session as: "11. The Permanent Forum calls upon the United States of America and all Member States to uphold their commitments to ensuring the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples who require a visa to attend the sessions of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and other relevant meetings, in line with the joint letter of April 2025 from the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indig-

enous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. In their letter, they highlight the urgent need to facilitate the timely issuance of visas and unimpeded access to venues, with a view to ensuring the meaningful inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making, as enshrined in articles 18 and 42 of the Declaration, supported by the Charter of the United Nations and other relevant international human rights instruments."

Furthermore, In the comments, they are consistently framed as determinants of political inclusion. Respondents note that delayed funding decisions undermine visa appli-

cations. Restrictive accreditation criteria exclude newer or smaller organizations while inaccessible procedures, including INDICO rejections, further limit participation. The complexity of registration platforms filters out grassroots actors. Persistent barriers related to visa processes, including delays, denials, difficulties in securing appointments, and limited access to consular services, compound these challenges. High travel costs, coupled with late or uncertain sponsorship responses, further restrict access. At the institutional level, concerns were also raised regarding limited Secretariat capacity, as well as insufficient support and responsiveness. The uncertainty of speaking slots can render costly participation substantively meaningless. In-person attendance is often described as prohibitively expensive, while online participation is characterized as unequal, limited, and insufficient for meaningful inclusion of Indigenous Peoples' perspectives.

In addition, respondents highlight travel restrictions imposed on certain countries for entry into the United States, as well as experiences of discriminatory, degrading, or even hostile treatment at airports and within host cities, which further discourage participation and raise serious concerns regarding dignity, safety, and equitable access. Notably, in response to the persistence and, in some cases, intensification of such challenges, the Permanent Forum has previously articulated the importance of flexibility in the location of its sessions. As stated in its Twenty Fourth report:

“98. The Permanent Forum notes that Indigenous Peoples have long struggled to have their voices heard at the United Nations in New York, Geneva and other venues. The Secretary General’s UN80 Initiative, under which all United Nations activities and the current liquidity crisis are being reviewed, should not result in the diminished participation of Indigenous Peoples’ representatives at the United Nations; rather, it should serve as an opportunity to enhance the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, including by finalizing the processes outlined in General Assembly resolution 71/321.”

Particularly important is the repeated reference to new or community-rooted organizations being deemed ineligible or unable to access formal participation routes. This points to a structural tension: procedural requirements designed for administrative order can produce substantive exclusion if they are not adapted to Indigenous Peoples' organizational realities, including newer formations, customary institutions, representative traditional authorities, and territorially grounded collectives that do not fit conventional bureaucratic models.

This cluster of comments reveals that procedural design is not neutral. Administrative systems can either facilitate self-determination or reproduce colonial filters under technocratic and bureaucratic language.

5.5 The Matter of Inclusion

- Another highly consistent finding is the demand to move beyond formal “Indigenous Peoples participation” toward meaningful inclusion of those who are most often marginalized. Many respondents specifically call for stronger inclusion of Indigenous youth, Indigenous women, persons with disabilities, pastoralists, grassroots leaders, small community organizations, climate-vulnerable communities, and defenders living under direct threat.

Importantly, these comments do not frame inclusion only as a representational value. They frame it as an epistemic necessity. In other words, respondents argue that those living the most acute realities of dispossession, violence, climate disruption, extractivism, and cultural erosion often understand the issues most directly and should therefore shape the agenda, not merely be occasionally showcased within it.

There is also a clear intergenerational dimension. Youth inclusion is repeatedly linked to continuity, leadership development, transmission of Indigenous heritage, and the future of Indigenous governance. Similarly, women’s participation is linked not only to fairness but to more grounded territorial representation. Several comments suggest

that current participation patterns privilege status and visibility over lived experience and direct accountability.

This body of comments supports a shift from a generic inclusion model to a differentiated inclusion model, one that actively corrects for internal exclusions.

5.6 Follow-Up, Monitoring, and Accountability

- No theme appears more frequently than the perceived weakness of follow-up. Across languages, respondents call for better monitoring of recommendations, clearer implementation pathways, periodic reporting, accountability mechanisms for States and UN agencies, and stronger links between recommendations and tangible outcomes.

Several respondents explicitly note that recommendations are too numerous, difficult to monitor, or insufficiently prioritized. Others ask for independent monitoring bodies, periodic reports, sanction mechanisms, or stronger implementation tools. Some comments go further, suggesting that without follow-up, the entire cycle of testimony, recommendation, and reporting becomes performative.

At the same time, a more nuanced reading suggests that respondents are not necessarily demanding that UNPFII become an enforcement body in a strict legal sense. Rather, they are demanding that the Forum stop operating as if issuing recommendations were enough. They want a stronger architecture of consequence: structured follow-up, independent indigenous-based tracking systems and implementation reviews, coordinated pressure within the UN system, escalation pathways, and political visibility for non-compliance.

This indicates that the Forum’s authority may need to be reimagined not as command authority, but as coordination authority, visibility authority, and accountability-framing authority.

The comments strongly suggest that UNPFII should more systematically track whether its recommendations are acted upon, by whom, and with what result. In this regard, it is important to recall that the principle of evaluation was embedded in the Forum’s founding framework. As established by the Economic and Social Council:

“7. Decides that, five years after its establishment, an evaluation of the functioning of the Permanent Forum, including the method for selection of its members, shall be carried out by the Council in the light of the experience gained.”¹⁴

This provision underscores that the need for systematic assessment, follow-up, and institutional learning is not a newly emerging concern, but rather a foundational expectation. The present assessment therefore reinforces the

continued relevance—and urgency—of operationalizing this evaluative mandate in a manner that strengthens the Forum’s effectiveness and accountability in practice.

This concern regarding follow-up and accountability is further illuminated when situated within the existing institutional framework of the Forum. As summarized by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) in its 2022 review of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies, the Permanent Forum annually produces a report following each session, which is transmitted to ECOSOC. Given the standing agenda item on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Forum’s reports assess progress in this regard.

The same review further emphasized that “subsidiary bodies as well as the UN system can promote and use international instruments such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in their work... [and that] cooperation between subsidiary bodies contributes to ensuring coherence on overlapping policy issues, including through strengthened cross-collaboration” (UN-GGIM, 2022).

However, the qualitative responses suggest that this formal architecture has not yet translated into sufficiently effective or visible practice. Several respondents articulated expectations that closely mirror, and in some cases extend, the Forum’s existing mandate, yet remain only partially realized in implementation. These include:

- Raising awareness and strengthening coordination among UN agencies, programmes, and mechanisms to ensure that Indigenous Peoples issues are treated as high-level priorities and addressed in culturally competent ways
- Disseminating information in a manner that effectively reaches relevant UN offices, national ministries, Indigenous Peoples organizations, and appropriate nation-

¹⁴ ECOSOC resolution 2000/22, para. 7

al and international platforms, thereby enhancing visibility and knowledge-sharing as a core institutional function

- Fostering, monitoring, and evaluating the implementation of UNDRIP across the UN system and at local levels, with particular emphasis on follow-up, accountability, and systemic strengthening

Taken together, these comments reveal not a rejection of the Forum's mandate, but a demand for its fuller operationalization. They underscore a critical gap between the Forum's formal reporting and coordination functions

and the expectations of Indigenous Peoples for effective dissemination, inter-agency coherence, and accountable implementation of UNDRIP across scales.

5.7 Safety, Reprisals, and Harassment

- The UNPFII should be explicitly recognized as a safe and secure space for Indigenous Peoples, ensuring that all representatives can participate free from any form of harassment, intimidation, or threat, consistent with the standards and obligations that govern all UN spaces. As a UN-mandated platform, the Forum is expected to uphold an environment in which Indigenous Peoples' representatives are able to engage without fear, and where their dignity, safety, and integrity are fully protected at all times.

A particularly serious theme concerns safety. Some respondents describe the Forum and related spaces as unsafe for Indigenous land defenders and representatives. They refer to harassment by State actors, intimidation, lack of protective measures, absence of clear complaint procedures, and the risk of reprisals after participation in UN processes.

This is one of the most important findings because it moves beyond questions of participation to questions of harm. A forum cannot be considered inclusive if attendance exposes participants to surveillance, retaliation, or violence without protective protocols. The comments indicate that security must be understood not only in physical terms at UN premises, but also in relation to post-participation risks in home countries and territories.

Several respondents explicitly call for clear denunciation protocols, a zero-tolerance policy for verbal and physical violence, and more serious institutional attention to the safety of Indigenous participants and defenders. This suggests that protection against reprisals should become an explicit operational component of the Forum's work, rather than a peripheral concern.

The Forum must ensure that its expert members actively prevent and address any form of harassment, supported by clear institutional protocols, defined responsibilities, and accessible reporting and response mechanisms. This

responsibility extends beyond passive awareness to proactive engagement, requiring members to uphold the highest standards of conduct, intervene where necessary, and contribute to creating a protective and enabling environment for all participants.

Some respondents also expressed concerns about experiences of harassment involving certain Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Peoples' organizations within the Forum. The UNPFII must ensure that it remains an inclusive, respectful, and safe space, where all Indigenous Peoples can participate equally and with dignity. In this regard, safeguarding measures should be embedded as an integral component of the Forum's operational practice, ensuring that concerns related to safety, dignity, and protection from reprisals are systematically addressed and not treated as incidental or ad hoc matters.

5.8 The Matter of Colonial Patterns

- A number of comments go beyond operational critiques and frame the problem more fundamentally. They suggest that the Forum, or the wider UN system around it, still reproduces colonial patterns. This critique appears in several forms: inaccessible bureaucratic procedures, exclusionary registration systems, reliance on dominant languages, privileging uncritically state-aligned actors, insufficient respect for Indigenous Peoples' institutions, extractive treatment of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and testimony, and survey or data practices that force respondents into categories that do not reflect their realities.

One especially important comment argues that the questionnaire itself produced compromised data by requiring respondents to choose from predefined options that did not adequately reflect their position. This is not a trivial observation. It raises a methodological issue about epistemic justice: whether Indigenous respondents are invited to shape knowledge, or merely to fit into administratively convenient formats. At the same time, several respondents acknowledged and explicitly appreciated the inclusion of open-ended response boxes accompanying these predefined questions. They noted that these spaces allowed them to articulate perspectives beyond the limitations of fixed answer categories, thereby partially mitigating the constraints of structured formats. In this sense, the inclusion of such open-ended sections was recognized as an essential methodological step toward reducing bias and

moving beyond predetermined analytical frameworks, enabling a more inclusive and representative expression of Indigenous perspectives.

There are also comments criticizing the continued use or translation of terms in ways that respondents see as politically or culturally inappropriate, and comments denouncing the conflation of Indigenous Peoples with “local communities.” The latter is especially significant because several respondents identify the non-conflation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as a core achievement that must be preserved. This suggests that terminology is not semantic housekeeping; it is part of the legal and political defense of collective status and inherent rights. Taken together, these comments indicate that any future transformation of UNPFII must include not only procedural efficiency, but decolonial procedural redesign.

5.9 Secretariat Performance and Internal Trust

- Some comments raise concerns about the Secretariat's responsiveness, capacity, consultation practices, regional fairness, language barrier, and relationship with Forum members. These concerns include a lack of consultation with members on regional representation, insufficient trust, opacity in communications, limited responsiveness to urgent matters, and understaffing relative to the scale of the work.

This line of feedback is especially important because it shows that concerns about effectiveness are not directed only at States or external actors. They also concern internal governance and administrative culture. Several comments suggest that the Secretariat needs stronger capacity, more regional sensitivity, more timely communication, and perhaps staffing models better aligned with Indigenous Peoples realities and regional and language diversity.

There is also concern that internal procedures may inad-

vertently centralize influence or diminish fairness, including in relation to chairperson rotation, representation in meetings, and staff assumptions of expertise in areas where Indigenous members or regional actors should have a more direct role.

These comments indicate that the assessment should not confine itself to public-facing outputs. It should also evaluate the internal conditions through which institutional legitimacy is built or eroded.

5.10 Knowledge Products

- The comments show appreciation for UNPFII recommendations, studies, and reports, and some respondents provide concrete examples of how these have been used effectively in other UN bodies and thematic areas. This is significant because it confirms that the Forum's normative outputs do matter and can travel across institutions. Recommendations on environmental violence, pesticides, sacred items, human remains, and deconflation were specifically noted as useful and influential.

However, this positive assessment is offset by repeated frustration that reports often do not lead to sustained action. Respondents question the utility of producing high-quality reports if no implementation process follows. Some suggest that database improvements should include the ability to track testimonies, recommendations, State and UN agencies responses, and concrete outcomes. Others want the Forum's outputs to be more accessible linguistically and regionally.

The emerging conclusion is that the issue is not whether UNPFII should continue producing recommendations and studies; it is whether those outputs are embedded in a

stronger cycle of dissemination, tracking, uptake, and accountability.

5.11 The Matter of Collaboration

- Several comments call for greater collaboration with Indigenous Peoples organizations, regional bodies, NGOs, professional networks, museums, evaluators, and other UN mechanisms. This indicates that respondents see value in a broader ecosystem of action. At the same time, some caution that non-Indigenous NGOs should not crowd out Indigenous representative institutions in one of the few spaces specifically dedicated to Indigenous Peoples.

This tension is important. Respondents are not uniformly anti-collaboration; they are opposed to collaboration that dilutes Indigenous decision-making authority or substitutes external voices for Indigenous representative institutions. The implication is that partnership should be expanded, but through a clear hierarchy of legitimacy in which Indigenous Peoples' own institutions remain central.

5.12 Political Context and Grievances

- Many comments refer to specific political contexts: long-term armed conflict, militarization, Sanctions, extractivism, lack of recognition, genocide, colonial occupation, epistemicide – the erasure or marginalization of Indigenous Peoples’ ways of knowing through the imposition of externally defined categories, discriminatory systemic approaches and narratives, reprisals, and erasure. These comments demonstrate that respondents are not only asking for generic institutional reform. They are also asking whether the Forum is willing to confront politically difficult cases with consistency and courage.

This should be interpreted carefully. The comments do not necessarily imply that UNPFII has ignored every such issue. Rather, they reflect a strong perception among some respondents that the Forum’s political attention is uneven and that some cases remain under-addressed or depoliticized. This is particularly important for an assessment of trust: even where the Forum has done meaningful work, perceived selectivity can weaken credibility.

Several respondents expressed grievances rooted in historical injustices, marginalization, and ongoing political challenges, including conflict, dispossession, colonization, and lack of recognition. These concerns reflect a perception that some issues affecting Indigenous Peoples are insufficiently addressed or inconsistently prioritized. Such grievances highlight the importance of ensuring that the Forum serves as a credible space where all concerns are acknowledged, treated equitably, and addressed with transparency and integrity.

If the comments are read together rather than individually, five deeper conclusions emerge.

First, respondents want a Forum that is closer to communities, not only geographically but institutionally and epistemically.

Second, they want participation to be redistributed away from repeated elite capture and toward accountable, territorial, intergenerational, and grassroots representation.

Third, they want recommendations to become part of a visible chain of follow-up and real implementation on the ground, rather than the endpoint of the Forum’s intervention.

Fourth, they want institutional procedures themselves to be reviewed through a lens that is explicitly against all forms of coloniality and systematic barriers and bias, while ensuring accessibility, fairness, and self-determination.

Fifth, they want the Forum to protect Indigenous Peoples not only by speaking about rights, but by restructuring its own spaces so that participation does not reproduce exclusion, erasure, or harm.

6. Conclusion, Recommendations, and Pathways For Institutional Transformation

- This report represents a landmark moment in the institutional history of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. For the first time since its establishment, a comprehensive and multidimensional assessment has been undertaken based on its recommendation on its twenty fourth session and under para 106 which is fundamentally based on para 7 and 8 of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 2000/22, through a voluntary process led by a group of experts composed of both current and former members of the Forum, with the explicit objective of strengthening its role and effectiveness and converge on a central and inescapable conclusion: the legitimacy and effectiveness of any institution are not static attributes, but must be continuously re-examined, transformed, and re-grounded in the realities of those it is mandated to serve. This assessment itself is a manifestation of that principle.

At the core of this assessment lies a global, multilingual questionnaire disseminated across all seven sociocultural regions of Indigenous Peoples, which received a high level of engagement and substantive responses. These contributions are grounded in the lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples, many of whom have maintained sustained and direct engagement with the Forum over time. As such, they reflect not abstract opinions, but informed, experience-based perspectives on the Forum's functioning. Recognizing and meaningfully responding to these voices, and acting proactively upon their articulated priorities and concerns, which themselves embody the exercise of the right to self-determination, places the Forum at a critical juncture. In light of its mandate, this moment calls for clear, timely, and decisive action to translate these demands into concrete and sustainable institutional measures.

Initiated in response to longstanding and repeated calls from Indigenous Peoples, their representative institutions, and members of the Forum, the present process reflects a collective demand for accountability, responsiveness, and institutional transformation. The fact that this report has been undertaken voluntarily by Indigenous experts, many of whom have themselves served within the Forum, further reinforces the credibility of its findings. Their engagement confirms that the challenges identified are neither incidental nor external, but are recognized across both community and institutional levels.

At the same time, it is essential to recall the unique and irreplaceable role of the UNPFII within the UN system. As the only body mandated to provide comprehensive advice on all matters relating to Indigenous Peoples _ranging from land and territories to health, education, conflict,

and climate change_ the Forum occupies a position of system-wide relevance and responsibility. Its core functions _providing expert advice, promoting coordination, disseminating knowledge, and advancing the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, Article 42)_ remain both necessary and indispensable.

However, the evidence presented throughout this report demonstrates that the realization of this mandate remains uneven. Persistent challenges, including limited accessibility, weak follow-up mechanisms, fragmented coordination, and insufficient institutional support for implementation, have constrained the Forum's ability to translate its normative authority into tangible outcomes. Importantly, these challenges are not indicative of institutional failure, but of institutional incompleteness.

They point to a Forum that is recognized, but not fully accessible; influential in discourse, but limited in implementation; inclusive in principle, but unequal in practice; productive in recommendations, yet insufficiently equipped to ensure their realization. It is precisely within this space, between mandate and implementation, that the present recommendations are situated.

6.1 From Assessment to Action

- Building on the conceptual framework proposed by UNPFII members for the Comprehensive Assessment Report, this section translates analytical findings into an operational pathway for institutional strengthening, structured across key dimensions of effectiveness, inclusivity, coordination, and follow-up.

The recommendations that follow are not externally imposed prescriptions. They are grounded in:

- empirical evidence derived from over 200 responses across all seven sociocultural regions of the Indigenous Peoples
- qualitative insights reflecting lived realities and institutional experiences
- the collective expertise of Indigenous practitioners and current and former members of the Permanent Forum
- and a comprehensive literature review, including annual reports of the Permanent Forum, independent reports and reflections produced by Forum members, as well as systematically reviewed and categorized statements delivered by Indigenous Peoples participating in the Forum's sessions

As such, they should be understood as a co-produced and evidence-based roadmap for institutional transformation, emerging from the intersection of empirical data, lived experience, institutional knowledge, and documented practice. Therefore, the present report reflects a collective demand for accountability, responsiveness, and institutional transformation. The fact that this report has been undertaken voluntarily by Indigenous experts, many of whom have themselves served within the Forum, further reinforces the credibility of its findings. Their engagement confirms that the challenges identified are neither incidental nor external, but are recognized across both community and institutional levels.

At the same time, it is essential to recall the unique and irreplaceable role of the UNPFII within the United Nations system. As the only body mandated to provide comprehensive advice on all matters relating to Indigenous Peoples, ranging from land and territories to health, education, conflict, and climate change, the Forum occupies a position of system-wide relevance and responsibility. Its core functions, providing expert advice, promoting coordination, disseminating knowledge, and advancing the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, Article 42), remain both necessary and indispensable.

However, the evidence presented throughout this report demonstrates that the realization of this mandate remains uneven. Persistent challenges, including limited accessi-

bility, weak follow-up mechanisms, fragmented coordination, and insufficient institutional support for implementation, have constrained the Forum's ability to translate its normative authority into tangible outcomes. Importantly, these challenges are not indicative of institutional failure, but of institutional incompleteness.

They point to a Forum that is recognized, but not fully accessible; influential in discourse, but limited in implementation; inclusive in principle, but unequal in practice; productive in recommendations, yet insufficiently equipped to ensure their realization.

The effective implementation of these recommendations will require sustained, transparent, and accountable follow-up. To this end, it is strongly recommended that a dedicated working group be formally established, as part of the Forum's twenty-fifth session's report in 2026, in line with its ongoing assessment process, as well as UN General Assembly "landmark resolution to strengthen the work of the UN system" adopted 31st March 2026 . Such a working group should include, at a minimum, five experts drawn from among those who have voluntarily contributed to the present report, ensuring continuity of expertise and institutional memory. This body would be mandated to monitor, support, and track the implementation of the report's recommendations through to the realization of procedural transformation.

6.2 Strategic Objectives and Action Pathways

■ The assessment demonstrates that UNPFII’s internal positioning within the United Nations system is characterized by a structural asymmetry between normative authority and operational traction. While the Forum is widely recognized as a legitimate advisory body, its recommendations remain weakly embedded within the decision-making and programmatic cycles of United Nations entities. This results in a persistent disjunction between articulation and implementation, where recommendations circulate but do not consistently translate into institutional behavior, policy uptake, or measurable outcomes.

This gap reflects not a failure of mandate, but the absence of a structured inter-agency architecture capable of linking advisory outputs to system-wide accountability and coordination.

The report:

- Recalling its mandate to provide expert advice and recommendations on Indigenous Peoples’ rights to the ECOSOC and within the United Nations system,
 - Reaffirming the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), in particular the rights to self-determination, participation, and Free, Prior and Informed Consent,
 - Recognizing the persistent gap between normative commitments and operational implementation across the United Nations system,
 - Expressing concern over structural barriers that continue to limit full, effective, and equitable participation of Indigenous Peoples,
 - Emphasizing the need to strengthen accountability, coherence, and inclusivity in all aspects of the Forum’s work,
- and to report during each session of the forum;
 - Requests all relevant UN entities and agencies working group to provide formal and timely responses to recommendations, including justification in cases of non-implementation;
 - Encourages the designation of dedicated focal points within UN entities and agency working group by thematic focus to ensure sustained engagement and coordination with the Forum and forum members based on thematics and expertise during the year and report back during each forum, including regular reporting and review cycles;
 - Calls upon ECOSOC to integrate follow-up and accountability requirements within its reporting processes including the urgent implementation of the Para 7 and 8 of the UN resolution 200/22;
 - Encourages enhanced coordination with the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur, including through joint initiatives and aligned workplans (join statements, call and events to respond to Indigenous Peoples’ needs).

Recommends the following actions.

1. Strengthening System-Wide Accountability and Coherence

The report:

- Urges United Nations entities to ensure the systematic integration and implementation of UNPFII recommendations within their mandates, policies, and programming frameworks;
- Calls for the establishment of a transparent system-wide tracking mechanism to monitor the implementation of recommendations, including the identification of responsible entities, timelines, and measurable outcomes to be follow up during the year

2. Ensuring Indigenous Peoples’ Leadership In External Engagement

The findings reveal that UNPFII’s external engagement operates within a tension between necessary collaboration and the risk of representational dilution. While partnerships with NGOs, international organizations, and expert networks expand the Forum’s reach, they may also inadvertently displace Indigenous representative institutions or reproduce asymmetries in visibility and influence.

The core challenge is therefore not whether to collaborate, but how to structure collaboration in ways that reinforce Indigenous political authority rather than substitute for it.

The report:

- Affirms that all partnerships and external engagements must respect and reinforce the primacy of Indigenous Peoples' leadership and self-determination;
- Calls for the development of a clear and structured partnership framework, defining roles, responsibilities, and accountability standards for all external actors;
- Urges that Indigenous Peoples-led institutions be prioritized as primary interlocutors in all collaborative processes;
- Requests full transparency regarding the participation and influence of external partners;
- Encourages the establishment of Indigenous-led advisory mechanisms to guide and oversee partnerships;
- Further recommends that all partnerships demonstrate alignment with UNDRIP principles, including Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

3. Removing Administrative Barriers to Participation

The report clearly establishes that administrative systems function as determinants of inclusion, not neutral infrastructures. Barriers related to accreditation, funding, visa processes, communication, and Secretariat responsiveness directly shape who can access the Forum and under what conditions.

Administrative inefficiencies, therefore, translate into structural exclusion, undermining both legitimacy and effectiveness.

The report

- Expresses concern that administrative processes, including accreditation, funding, and visa procedures, continue to hinder equitable participation;
- Calls for the simplification and adaptation of accreditation procedures to reflect the diversity of Indigenous Peoples' institutions;
- Urges the alignment of funding timelines with visa and travel requirements to enable effective participation;
- Requests the establishment of responsive communication and support mechanisms within the Secretariat;
- Encourages the strengthening of Secretariat capacity, including regionally representative staffing;
- Further recommends the development of integrated participation support systems, including funding, logistics, and accreditation;
- Calls for the expansion of digital and hybrid participation modalities to ensure inclusivity;

- Recommends the establishment of a mechanism to review and address persistent barriers related to the Forum's location, ensuring safe, equitable, and non-discriminatory access.

4. Enhancing The Impact of Knowledge and Recommendations

The Forum's knowledge outputs are widely recognized as valuable, yet their impact is constrained by weak integration into implementation processes. The current system emphasizes production over circulation, and dissemination over uptake. This results in a disconnect between knowledge generation and institutional or political transformation.

The report

- Recognizes the value of the Forum's knowledge outputs while noting limitations in their uptake and operational impact;
- Calls for the transformation of the recommendations database into a dynamic and accessible accountability platform;
- Requests that recommendations be systematically linked to responsible actors, timelines, and implementation pathways;
- Encourages the development of accessible, multilingual, and user-oriented formats, including Indigenous Peoples' languages;
- Urges United Nations entities and agencies to integrate Forum outputs into policy development and programming processes;
- Further recommends the establishment of mechanisms to track and evaluate the impact of recommendations over time in accordance with the Para 7 of the UN resolution 2000/22;
- Affirms the importance of recognizing and integrating Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems as equal and complementary to western scientific knowledge.

5. Expanding Equitable Participation and Outreach

The most consistent finding across the study is the gap between symbolic recognition and lived inclusion. While UNPFII is widely known and valued, access remains structurally unequal, and participation patterns are concentrated among a limited set of actors.

This reveals a deeply embedded centralization bias, where participation depends on mobility, resources, and institutional familiarity rather than representational legitimacy.

The report

- Recognizes the persistence of structural inequalities in access to the Forum;
- Calls for the expansion of outreach through Indigenous Peoples-led communication channels;
- Urges increased accessibility of information in Indigenous Peoples' languages and culturally appropriate formats;
- Encourages the prioritization of participation of underrepresented groups, including women, youth, pastoralists, and human rights defenders;
- Recommends the development of a decentralized participation framework, including regional and sub-regional engagement processes;
- Calls for the introduction of rotation mechanisms to ensure broader and more equitable representation of the leadership role of Chair, Vice Chairs and reporter of the forum to allow equity and regional balance;
- Further recommends the redefinition of participation criteria to reflect representational legitimacy and accountability to Indigenous communities;
- Affirms that participation must be understood as a continuous and inclusive process, rather than limited to annual sessions.

Cross-Cutting Recommendation

Emphasizes that all reforms should be guided by the principles of:

- Indigenous Peoples' self-determination and leadership
- Equity and non-discrimination
- Transparency and accountability
- Full and effective participation

Calls for a shift from advisory outputs to measurable outcomes, ensuring that the work of the Forum translates into tangible improvements in the lives, rights, and well-being of Indigenous Peoples.



United Nations
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

25th Session
New York, 20 April – 1 May 2026