

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MAJOR GROUP STATEMENT

SESSION: SDGs in focus: SDG 14 and interlinkages with other SDGs – Life below water

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On behalf of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group, I thank you for the opportunity to address this session today. We welcome the review on SDG 14.

Regarding the next step toward the matured targets, the contribution by Indigenous Peoples to sustainable management of coastal and marine ecosystems are critical to achieving these targets. Many indigenous peoples around the world depend on fisheries for their livelihoods, and food security, and contribute significantly to the sustainable management and stewardship of coastal and marine ecosystems through specialised knowledge systems and practices.

In response to the key actions and partnerships, enhanced consultation and FPIC in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors is necessary: Indigenous peoples must be consulted and participate in decision-making regarding projects and processes that affect their rights. Duty bearers should ensure Indigenous Peoples' **free, prior, and informed consent** to proposed development measures; particularly in dialogue around conservation measures, where Indigenous Peoples knowledge, expertise and stewardship of these resources must be included in any action designed and implemented to achieve Goal 14 that may affect them.

There must be respect, protection, and fulfillment of the rights of indigenous peoples' to marine resources. Indigenous Peoples rights must be considered in discussions and developments toward partnerships and the blue economy.

The discrimination, criminalisation and abuse experienced by indigenous peoples has been extensively documented on land - but is equally important to address when it comes to criminalizing traditional fishing practices in the context of marine resource governance, as in the case of the Saami Indigenous Peoples in Finland.

Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories, and resources they have traditionally owned, or otherwise occupied and used, and the right to engage freely in their traditional and other economic activities, including fishing. Businesses are major contributors to the destruction of the ecosystems and the loss of biodiversity of indigenous territories, including through “ocean grabbing” and the overexploitation of marine resources.

In many parts of the world, their rights – particularly that of FPIC - in the context of coastal and marine ecosystems are not adequately recognised, protected, or

enforced, with dramatic consequences for the peoples concerned and the sustainable management of these ecosystems. Moreover, their contribution — and particularly Indigenous Women’s contributions— to SDG 14 Life Below Water has received limited attention in global discussions on sustainable oceans and fisheries.

We recommend that Indigenous Peoples be included within these global discussions considering their internationally recognized rights

More attention to the human rights situation of indigenous peoples engaged in fisheries is needed: The respect, protection and fulfilment of indigenous peoples’ human rights is key to the achievement of the SDGs. Any action should be human rights-based and guided by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other relevant human rights instruments. Indigenous peoples should participate in the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of such action, including any relevant policy, plan and project.
