

**Subject: Request for the inclusion of the impact of illegal economies on Indigenous Peoples in the agenda of the Permanent Forum**

*Quito, April 9, 2025*

To the distinguished members of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues:

Receive our respectful greetings on behalf of the Indigenous organizations endorsing this letter. We are writing to request the inclusion of an analysis on the impact of illegal economies on Indigenous Peoples as part of the 24th session of the Permanent Forum, given that this session will address the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and its link to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Illicit economies—such as drug trafficking, illegal mining, indiscriminate logging, and land trafficking—pose an escalating threat to the integrity, self-determination, and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples. These activities have led to rising violence in Indigenous territories, including the assassination of leaders, forced recruitment of youth, community displacement, and increasing militarization, which further deepens the risks faced by Indigenous communities. Additionally, environmental crimes such as mercury contamination, deforestation, and ecosystem destruction jeopardize biodiversity and traditional ways of life, violating fundamental rights such as the right to life, health, food, territory, and a healthy environment.

In its 2023 report, the Permanent Forum already recognized this issue and urged the inclusion of Amazonian Indigenous Peoples in the roadmap of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) regarding organized crime and cross-border illicit activities. However, the expansion of these illegal economies demands more forceful, effective, and urgent measures. The lack of appropriate state intervention—and, in some cases, the complicity of public officials with criminal networks—has fostered an environment of impunity, violence, territorial dispossession, and systemic exclusion of Indigenous Peoples from decision-making processes.

In this context, we urge the Permanent Forum to incorporate the following recommendations into its agenda:

- *Formally recognize that criminal economies pose an existential threat to Indigenous Peoples, and convene an international expert meeting during the 2025–2026 biennium, focused on security, Indigenous Peoples', and illicit economies. This meeting should aim to design integrated, inclusive, and measurable responses, with the direct participation of Indigenous representatives, particularly women and youth. Key priorities should include: addressing the environmental crisis caused by illicit activities through an action plan aligned with the Minamata Convention and other international instruments; preventing violence and forced recruitment without resorting to militarization; implementing intercultural and rights-based security mechanisms; ensuring comprehensive protection for leaders and defenders within their own communities; advancing collective land titling and effective territorial control; holding consumer States of illegal resources accountable through traceability and sanction mechanisms; and promoting sustainable, inclusive economic alternatives with territorial and cultural relevance.*

*We also request that the Permanent Forum include the following recommendations to specialized international bodies in its conclusions, to strengthen mechanisms for the inclusion and protection of Indigenous Peoples' in contexts affected by organized crime:*

- *The Permanent Forum recommends that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Review Mechanism of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime recognize the serious impact of transnational criminal economies on Indigenous Peoples, their territories, and global peace. It is imperative to ensure the permanent and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in UNODC spaces, including intersessional working groups and the Crime Prevention Congress, to influence the design, implementation, and evaluation of strategies to prevent organized crime through human rights-based, intercultural, and territorially appropriate approaches. Furthermore, it is recommended that Indigenous representatives be included in the Convention's expert committees, particularly in the development of a protocol on environmental crimes that addresses illegal logging and mining, wildlife trafficking, drug trafficking, and other illicit activities that directly affect their territories and threaten their right to self-determination.*
- The Permanent Forum also recommends that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) develop a specialized report and convene a thematic hearing on the impact of organized crime on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the ecosystems they inhabit. This report should include a detailed analysis of the threats posed by illicit activities such as drug trafficking, illegal mining, and human trafficking in Indigenous territories, and provide concrete, differentiated recommendations to Member States. These recommendations should aim to ensure the comprehensive protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples from an intersectional perspective that recognizes the specific impacts on women, girls, elders, and territorial defenders.

These measures are essential to guarantee the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples, protect their territories and cultures, and strengthen their capacity for resistance in the face of advancing organized crime. We trust that the Permanent Forum will play a key role in promoting urgent and concrete commitments from States and the United Nations system to address this crisis.

We thank you for your attention and remain available to further discuss this proposal during the upcoming session.

Sincerely,

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| 1. Articulación de los Pueblos Indígenas de Brasil (APIB)                           | 9. Colectivo de Mujeres Amazónicas Defensoras de la Selva de Ecuador            |
| 2. Asociación de Comunidades Indígenas de Villagarzón, Putumayo, Colombia (ACIMVIP) | 10. Comisión de Derechos Humanos para Pueblos Indígenas de Colombia             |
| 3. Asociación Interétnica para el Desarrollo de la Amazonía Peruana (AIDSEP)        | 11. Comunidad Indígena Bajo Mirador Yanacona de Orito, Putumayo, Colombia       |
| 4. Asociación de mujeres indígenas Sta María Xalapan Jalapa Amismaxaj, Guatemala    | 12. Confederación Amazónica de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONFENIAE) |
| 5. Cabildo Indígena Korebaü Bajü Paii de Mocoa, Putumayo, Colombia                  | 13. Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE)              |
| 6. Cabildo Indígena Nasa Putumayo Kiwe Muhmtha (Cerro Guadua), Colombia             | 14. Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca, Colombia (CRIC)                        |
| 7. Campesinos y Áreas Protegidas, Bolivia (CONTIOCAP)                               | 15. Coordinadora de Pueblos Indígenas de San Lorenzo, Loreto, Perú (CORPI-SL)   |
| 8. Colectivo Ambiental Cumbal, Nariño, Colombia                                     | 16. Coordinadora de Pueblos Indígenas de San Martín, Perú (Codepisam)           |

17. Coordinadora Nacional de Defensa de Territorios Indígenas Originarios, Campesinos y Áreas Protegidas, Bolivia (CONTIOCAP)
18. Federación de Comunidades Nativas del Ucayali y Afluentes, Perú (FECONAU)
19. Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas del Napo, Ecuador (FOIN)
20. Federación Nativa de Comunidades Kakataibo, Perú (FENACOKA)
21. Fortaleza Organizativa de Mujeres Incluyentes con Identidad A.C, Organización de Mujeres Zapotecas de los Valles Centrales de Oaxaca, Mexico
22. Gobierno Territorial Autónomo de la Nación Wampís, Perú (GTANW)
23. Grupo de Trabajo sobre Asuntos Indígenas, Universidad de los Andes, Venezuela
24. Mancomunidad de Comunidades Indígenas de los Ríos Beni, Tuichi y Quiquibey, Bolivia
25. Mapuche Human Rights Commission, Chile-Argentina (MHRC)
26. Nación Originaria Qhara Qhara, Bolivia
27. Nación Sapara del Ecuador (NASE)
28. Nacionalidad Shiwiari del Ecuador (NASHIE)
29. Nacionalidad Waorani del Ecuador (NAWE)
30. Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC)
31. Organización de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonía Colombiana (OPIAC)
32. Organización Regional AIDESEP Ucayali, Perú (ORAU)
33. Pueblo Originario Kichwa de Sarayaku de Ecuador
34. Unión de Afectados Por las Operaciones de Texaco de Ecuador (UDAPT)