

# United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Organization: United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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Description Since its creation in 2002, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has become the central institution for dealing with the concerns of Indigenous peoples in the United Nations system, and its visibility is growing rapidly. It includes an annual conference now attended by thousands of the representatives of the Indigenous peoples of the world, who are able to meet with the main UN agencies and with governments. The conference strives to establish what these agencies and governments are doing on Indigenous issues and to secure agreement on future policy affecting Indigenous peoples.

In a formal sense, the Permanent Forum is an advisory body consisting of sixteen members (eight appointed by governments and eight by the representatives of Indigenous peoples). Their mandate comprises six areas: economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health, and human rights. Both during conferences and throughout the year, the Forum members hear the submissions of Indigenous groups, UN agencies like UNDP or WHO and governments, in each of these six areas. They then give expert advice and policy recommendations to the UN Economic and Social Council.

Such a body had been discussed amongst Indigenous groups since the late 1980s and within the Working Group on Indigenous Populations there had been two main concerns. The first is that there were few opportunities for Indigenous people to participate within the formal mechanisms of the UN. The second concern was that the existing systems of the UN did not express the particular needs of Indigenous peoples effectively.

Suggested Reading: **UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Website.**  
[www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii) (accessed 23 March 2005).