

NGO Mining Working Group and Partners

The Concept Note of the 25th Session of the UNPFII Side Event

Theme of UNPFII25: *“Ensuring Indigenous Peoples’ health, including in the context of conflict.”*

Name/Title of Side Event:

“Health, Well-being, and the Dignity of Indigenous Peoples in the 'Lungs of Earth' Countries – the Amazon Region, Democratic Republic of Congo, and West Papua – in the Context of Land Grabbing, Deforestation, Extractivism, and Conflicts.”

Concept Note

The Amazon Region, the Congo Basin, and the island of New Guinea (West Papua and Papua New Guinea) contain the world's largest rainforests and are rich in biodiversity, supporting a significant share of the world's plant and animal species. These regions are known as the "Lungs of Earth" and play a critical role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem by absorbing significant amounts of carbon and producing oxygen. These areas are crucial for absorbing carbon dioxide and mitigating global warming and are at risk due to deforestation, land grabbing, extractive exploitation, and conflicts that harm the environment and the people living in those areas, especially indigenous peoples.

Land grabbing (including the proximity of military bases), deforestation, mining, fossil fuel extraction (oil & natural gas), and agri-business (extractivism) cause profound, intersecting crises for Indigenous peoples, primarily resulting in landscape loss, livelihood destruction, and land dispossession. These actions destroy biodiversity, trigger violent displacement, pollute essential water and soil, and erode cultural heritage. They violate human rights, including the right to health and a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

Moreover, land grabbing, deforestation, and extractive activities cause severe health, environmental, and social crises. Deforestation increases human-animal contact, triggering the emergence of zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19, Ebola, and the Nipah virus. It also increases malaria and dengue due to habitat changes that favor mosquitoes. Workers in deforested, extractive areas experience increased heat exposure and strain, leading to reduced productivity and increased health risks.

The occupation of Indigenous peoples’ territories and the conquest of their natural resources through massive agri-business, extraction, and deforestation (extractives), which have triggered enduring conflicts with Indigenous peoples and local communities, as in West Papua, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Amazon Region, have been deeply rooted in the history of colonization of the nations, especially the First Nations, for centuries.

This side event will focus on two aspects: the challenges Indigenous communities in the Amazon region, the DRC, and West Papua face in meeting their needs and rights to health and well-being amid conflicts related to land grabbing, deforestation, and extractive activities. Taking into account

the historical roots of the current conflicts in the “Lungs of Earth” regions, this side event will also highlight effective policies and best practices to defend the rights and dignity of Indigenous peoples, especially their rights to health and a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

Objectives

This side event aims to

- 1) Share information about the health and well-being issues of indigenous peoples in the "Lungs of Earth" countries affected by land grabbing, deforestation, extractive industry, and conflicts.
- 2) Analyze the deep-rooted causes of the current natural resource-based conflict, embedded in the history of colonization of the First Nations, in the three “Lungs of Earth” regions.
- 3) Promote and defend the rights of indigenous peoples. This includes the right to health and to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.
- 4) Identify effective policies and best practices for promoting and delivering a healthcare system for indigenous communities.

Speakers

Moderator: Rebecca Irby, Chair of the NGO Committee for Dignity

Opening Speaker:

- **H.E. Ms. Leonor Zalabata Torres**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Colombia to the United Nations.

Keynote speaker:

- **Mr. Brian Keane**, Co-founder of *Land is Life*, former Rapporteur of UNPFII (2017-2019), and the first Advisor for Indigenous Peoples’ Issues for the United States Foreign Assistance during the Barack Obama administration.

Panellists:

- **Ms. Lucila da Costa Moreira Nawa, Representative of Indigenous Peoples** from the Amazon region.
- **Ms. Evelyn Namakula Mayanja, Ph.D**, an interdisciplinary scholar, researcher, and educator who serves as an Assistant Professor at Carleton University.
- **Mr. Octo Mote**, Vice President of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua.
- **Joshua Cooper**, an academic, author, researcher, and human rights advocate based in Hawaii.

Date/time: 24 April 2026 from 1.15 P.M to 2.45 P.M ETD (New York time)

Venue (address): The 11th Floor of the Church Center for the United Nations (CC4UN) at 777 UN Plaza, 44th Street, New York, NY 10017.

Organizers: NGO Mining Working Group, VIVAT International, NGO Committee for Dignity, Justice Coalition for Religious (JCoR)

Co-sponsors: NGO Committee on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (NGO CRIP), Proclade Internazionale ONU US, NGO Committee on Social Development (NGO CSocD), Passionists International, Dominican Leadership Conference, World Christian Life Community, Mercy International Association, Sisters of Notre Dame De Namur, Dewan Adat Papua.

Interpretation available in (indicate languages): Spanish and English

Contact Person: Paul Rahmat

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In-person/Hybrid/Remote: Hybrid

- In person: at the Church Center for the United Nations (CC4UN)
- **Link to register for the event/webpage:**
 - <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/eZorlPRPSgGCjgzndQaDug>

Tentative Schedule of Events

UNPFII25 Side Event The Panel Discussion Flow

- Housekeeping matters: technical instructions of the Zoom meeting – Marides (2')
- Moderator (Rebecca)
 - Welcome the participants in the room and on Zoom (1')
 - Setting the context: background of the panel and introducing the speakers (5')
- Opening Speech: H.E. Ms. Leonor Zalabata Torres, a video message (7')
- Panel discussion
 - Setting the context of panel discussion – Screening the West Papua movie trailer “Pig Feast” (3')
 - The 1st speaker: Ms. Lucila da Costa Moreira Nawa - Amazon Region, (10')
 - The 2nd Speaker: Ms. Evelyn Namakula Mayanja, PhD - DRC(10')
 - The 3rd Speaker: Mr. Octavian Mote – West Papua (10')
 - The 4th speaker: Mr. Joshua Cooper, Hawaii (10')
- QA session (15')
- Closing the panel – Paul Rahmat (2')