

Plenary Intervention, June 18th

Thank you, Chair.

As Co-Facilitator and on behalf of the UNEP Indigenous Peoples Major Group

We respectfully call attention to a seemingly small, but deeply significant matter: in the inclusion of a comma in the phrase “Indigenous Peoples, and local communities.”

This is not about grammar; it is about recognition. The use of a comma clearly distinguishes Indigenous Peoples as distinct rights holders under international law, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), from local communities, who may also be impacted but do not share the same collective legal status, historical context, or self-determined governance and have their rights protected under a different instrument, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP).

Too often, Indigenous Peoples are collapsed into broader categories that erase our identities and undermine our inherent rights. When language merges “Indigenous Peoples and local communities” as a single entity, it obscures these differences and weakens the implementation of our rights under UNDRIP Articles 3, 18, and 19, which affirm our right to self-determination, participation, and free, prior, and informed consent.

We refer to the Minamata Convention COP-5 Decision MC-5/1 as a precedent, where the decision text correctly uses: “Indigenous Peoples, as well as local communities,” thereby acknowledging both groups as distinct and equally important. More recently, UNEA6 Ministerial Declaration, UNFCCC COP, and UNCCD COP decisions, last week’s UN Oceans Conference (UNOC3) Ministerial Declaration and the Pact for the Future have similarly included a comma between Indigenous Peoples, and local communities. This shows a broad progressive understanding of the international community, which delegates here today should not allow to setback.

We urge this body to follow that example and adopt language that includes a comma: “Indigenous Peoples, local communities.” This is a matter of precision, of respect, and of ensuring that Indigenous Peoples are not rendered invisible in the very frameworks meant to protect our rights and our lands.

Thank you.

Frankie Orona

Executive Director - Society of Native Nations

Co-Facilitator of UNEP Indigenous Peoples Major Group