

Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the occasion of the International Day for the World's Indigenous Peoples

On the International Day for the World's Indigenous Peoples, we celebrate the contributions of indigenous peoples to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures and indeed to our common heritage. It is also a day where we take stock of the many achievements in the recognition and realisation of their rights and identify the actions that the world community still needs to take, so that human rights are universally applied without any discrimination.

Increasingly hostility, violence and reprisals are used against indigenous rights' and environmental defenders, including against the UN Special Rapporteur (SR) on the rights of indigenous peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz. We are alarmed that globally the number of murders of such defenders is estimated at four per week. The authorities in countries where such acts take place are expected to intensify their work to protect activists and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

The rise in the frequency of land grabbing needs also to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Every single day somewhere in the world indigenous peoples are being dispossessed of their ancestral lands, territories and resources.

Accountability and good governance are essential for the sustainable management of land, resources, and environment and in ensuring equitable access to land tenure. This is why the European Union supports land governance programmes and projects in 40 countries around the world with a total budget of €240 million. In Colombia alone the efforts lead to the collective titling of 280.000 hectares benefitting indigenous communities.

The European Union firmly believes that respecting the customary land tenure and resource rights of indigenous peoples are essential for sustainable development and peace. This year we will give €6.9 million to the Land and Forest Tenure Facility, which focuses specifically on the tenure rights and security of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. A further €5 million will be dedicated to Human Rights Defenders and organisations who work on land grabbing, climate change and on indigenous peoples' rights.

We will continue to stand up for indigenous peoples and support them to ensure they can retain their cultures, identities and way of life, that are part of our common culture, identity, way of life.

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