

Date: April 25th, 2025

Item 4: Discussion on the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum (economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health, and human rights), with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Presenter: Dr. Lizette Rivera

Organization: United Confederation of Taíno People (UCTP)

Seneko Kakona (Abundant Blessings), Madam Chair, distinguished delegates, and Indigenous relatives

My name is Dr. Lizette Rivera and my Taíno name is Guani. I am speaking on behalf of the United Confederation of Taíno People (UCTP). Despite centuries of brutal colonization, our Peoples continue to live, organize, and assert our rights in the Caribbean Islands and the Diaspora. The UN Declaration affirms our right to self-determination including full and effective participation in decisions that affect our Peoples. Yet across the Insular Caribbean the rights enshrined in the Declaration remain largely ignored.

For example, in the 2020 United States Census, over 112,000 Taíno including 50,000 people in Borikén (Puerto Rico) identified as Taíno, making us the 10th largest American Indian group recorded. However, this public acknowledgment has not translated into meaningful inclusion. We often remain invisible in Indigenous affairs; excluded from funding mechanisms; overlooked in climate adaptation strategies although we are gravely impacted by climate change; our history is a choice subject as the anniversary of our land's invasion nears! As territorial possessions of the United States, the lack of federal recognition; visibility and respect for our rights directly violate Articles 3, 18, 19, 33, and most importantly, 42 of the Declaration.

One single proposed project under the pretense of economic development can adversely impact our rights, all six mandated areas, and obstruct many of the Sustainable Development Goals! Proyecto Esencia in Cabo Rojo, Borikén, is one of such projects. Yet, while the opposition of this Project has been enormous, the project continues to be promoted.

The UCTP has previously made recommendations asking the Forum to call for an Expert Group Meeting on the Situation and Rights of Indigenous Peoples in non-Self-governing and unincorporated territories. We once again call on the forum to include this recommendation in the final report for this session. Our Confederation is willing to work in collaboration to ensure this meeting is facilitated.

Hahom. Thank you. Gracias